

COD'S WAR

F. TENNYSON NEELY, PUBLISHER, NEW YORK & LONDON

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GOD'S WAR.

BY
WILSON VANCE,

Author of "Prince's Favors" and "Little Amy's Christmas."



F. TENNYSON NEELY,
PUBLISHER,

LONDON.

NEW YORK.

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TO MY SONS AND MY DAUGHTERS; AND TO THE SONS AND THE
DAUGHTERS OF THE MEN AND WOMEN OF 1861 IN AMERICA;
AND TO THEIR CHILDREN, AND THEIR CHILDREN'S
CHILDREN UNTO THE REMOTEST GENERA-
TIONS OF THEM, THIS STORY
IS DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

To the end that the memory of the men and women whose valor and sacrifices defended and preserved the Republic through the trial as by fire of the great civil war in America shall not perish from the earth; that their descendants and successors may appreciate the splendor of the steadfast patriotism and patient resolute endurance to which humanity owes so much; and in the hope that the world may the better understand and value the lessons taught by a divinely ordained educational process, this story has been written. Persuaded that its faults must be many and grievous (since, how should a plain layman, sometime soldier, with no claims to literary skill, avoid them?), and conscious of its inadequacy, the author submits it; trusting that it may, at least in some small degree, accomplish the work whereunto it is sent.

November, 1898.

Since the foregoing was written and while the manuscript was still in the hands of the printer, the following letter appeared in the *New York Sun* of the 26th of December, 1898; and as it expresses, even better than the author of "God's War" could, his primary motive in writing the story, he takes the liberty to place it here,

without apology, but with thanks to "C. G. B.," whoever he may be.

"TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—Sir: The brief obituary notice subjoined appeared the other day in the New York *Times*:

BALAKLAVA HERO DEAD AT SPRINGFIELD.

"SPRINGFIELD, Mass., Dec 20.—John Howell, aged seventy-four, died to-day. He was born in England, and was one of the Six Hundred in the famous charge at Balaklava. He was also a veteran of the civil war.

"This illustrates vividly a mental attitude altogether too prevalent among us Americans. Here was an old warrior who had laid down his arms forever and gone to join the countless millions of good soldiers who have passed over to the majority. It is right and fitting that his death should be honorably recorded and handed down to memory in the complimentary terms quoted above, and I hope that tender hands may keep his grave green for ages to come. But!

"What is there in this career that appeals most powerfully to our interest and sympathy? Is it the fact that Howell was a 'Balaklava hero,' one of the 'Six Hundred' that made the 'famous charge?' or is it because he was a 'veteran of the civil war?' Evidently the former. The emphasis, the capitals and the headline all show that in the mind of the writer the Crimean chapter in this man's life was the glorious chapter, while his civil war experiences were but an episode.

"And so we find it everywhere. All our examples and illustrations in military matters are drawn from foreign warfare, and the heroes of our own great contest, the men who made the glorious history of 1861-1865, are passing into oblivion as 'veterans of the civil war.'

"I really believe that the reason why this is true is our ignorance of our own history. I can find you twenty men who are quite familiar with Austerlitz, Jena, Waterloo, Inkermann, Lucknow and Sedan to one who can give you any information about Spottsylvania, Antietam, or Stone River.

"Was the Balaklava matter unparalled in history? Was there anything in our great civil war that could compare

with it? Any instances of devotion; any percentage of loss nearly equal? Well, yes—there were maneuvers and charges; there were instances of self-sacrifice and loss; scores of them that far exceed the glorious record made by the light brigade on that October morning in 1854, or indeed any record made by any military organization other than American during this century!

“How would this read as an obituary notice in one of our American journals?

FRANKLIN HERO DEAD AT NASHVILLE.

“NASHVILLE, Tenn., Dec. 20.—John Howell died here yesterday, aged seventy-four years. He was born in Williamson county, was one of Cheatham’s division in the civil war, and took part in the famous charge against Schofield’s breast-works at Franklin. In his youth he was a member of the British army, and was present at the light cavalry affair at Balaklava.

“I fear that the average reader would be tempted to exclaim with Virgil *‘Sic parvis companionere magna,’* but the average reader would be wrong if he did. There was greater loss, greater sacrifice, and more bloody fighting on the part of ‘Old Frank’s’ (Cheatham’s) men on that beautiful Wednesday evening in November, 1864, than took place on any field in the Crimean War. While thirty-seven per cent. of Lord Cardigan’s six hundred and seventy-three men were killed and wounded, more than half of Cleburne’s and Brown’s two entire divisions were left dead or wounded in the fields and gardens of that little Tennessee town. And how many of us know anything about it?

“President McKinley well said at Atlanta the other day that it was time for the nation to care for the graves of the Confederate soldiers. By all means let us care for them and keep their memory fresh. The glory won by these men and their leaders on many a hard-fought field belongs to the American nation, and should be perpetuated by monuments of granite and marble on each and all of these fields, but especially should we insist that the deeds of all our soldiers should be carefully and truthfully enshrined in the pages of history, and proudly celebrated by orator and poet.

“Mr. John Fiske, in writing of the battle of Guilford Court House in 1781, says: ‘The British fighting was magnificent, worthy to be compared with that of Thomas

and his men at Chickamauga.' Thank you, Mr. Fiske, you did not need to go to the 'heights of Mont St. Jean' for an example of stubborn, dogged tenacity, but found quite as good a one in the pages of our own history.

"Yes! Thomas and Chickamauga, Jackson and the old railroad grade at Groveton, D. H. Hill in the sunken lane at Sharpsburg, Porter at Gaines' Mill for stubborn tenacity; the Second Corps under Couch at Fredericksburg, Pickett's division at Gettysburg, Cheatham at Franklin for daring valor against the impossible. Instances could be multiplied and examples given of every possible military virtue—courage, patience, obedience, endurance, almost beyond the power of man, all were illustrated by the American soldier in the great civil war to a degree that has never been excelled and seldom equalled in the history of the world.

"C. G. B.

"BLACK HALL, Conn., Dec. 24."

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GOD'S WAR.

PART I.

ORE IN THE BANK.

CHAPTER I.

“THAT’S ME!”

IF warm at all, an April afternoon in Clayton was always, in the days of which I write, pretty sure to be either one thing or another; that is to say, either very moist, showery, steamy and warm, or very soft, balmy and warm. In the former case of course the clouds came and went in masses across the heavens, dropping their fatness as they moved about; in the latter case the blue vault was exquisitely clear and joyous, and seemed like a great transparent sounding-board to send down to the earth and into the rather dull ears with which Clayton abounded, the songs of the spring birds which were almost as plentiful there as the swelling buds on the trees.

The particular April afternoon of which I am writing was in 1861, and it was of the soft, warm and heavenly description. The atmosphere was of the mildly exhilarating sort that puts healthy blood up to that degree of high animal spirits which gives perfect confidence, casting out all fear, driving megrims and blue devils to the rear, so that the impossible doesn't seem to be after all much more than a good, square, invigorating before-breakfast task.

The grass had not yet dared to venture fully forth in the Clayton latitude, but it showed a timid inclination to make the venture before long if nothing serious should happen meanwhile to give it a backset. There were spots (in the black mould which filled old Aunt Nan's circular flower beds surrounded with bricks planted deeply on end, for instance) where the green shoots of the crocuses made a swaggeringly brave show, while the flowers themselves wore an air of having always been there—whereas they had just been born. From the swaths cut in the heavy woods which surrounded the village—the swaths north, south, east and west cut by the county roads which went out through soggy swamp-lands and by the side of obstinate black-looking fields, through these channels the breath of the young spring came mingled and chilled with the cold dark vapors of dying winter; but in the village itself spring had fairly established herself and the deceptive mildness was provoking to active persons who grew heated but were restrained from doffing winter garments through a fear of the rheumatism and influenza which experience had taught them lay *perdu* ready to pounce upon the unduly precipitate.

There was an almost complete silence in the town, disturbed by little save the occasional bang of a hasty door or the clatter of a kitchen utensil as an unwary cat or a vigilant housewife interfered momentarily with the established order of things in the well-kept rooms which served in most Clayton homes not only for cooking but for dining and sitting rooms as well. Through the doors left open, from an unconscious desire to drink in the odors of the awakening season, came occasional tinkles of low laughter as matrons and maidens sat over their sewing and lightly discussed the small gossip belonging to the love-making of the little world in the woods; and the tang of the machinery in the new planing mill down by the creek had a dreamy tone and rhythm that lulled and soothed.

The farmers were all busy with a deperate attempt to avail themselves of the fortunate circumstance of the coming together of two clear, warm days without rain to get forward with their plowing; and not more than two

country wagons could be seen standing on Main Street. The shopkeepers sat within their doors patiently waiting, as becomes far-seeing traders who know that seed-time must precede harvest, and that wheat cannot be sold till it has been both sowed and reaped. There was not much chafing in their tranquil souls at this enforced leisure—their expenses were light and their small profits satisfactory because sufficient for their modest wants.

The clink of Nat Kellogg's hammer had ceased for some minutes and that industrious young man, with his black hands and sooty brow, his leathern apron rolled up to his waist and his hair lightly lifting with each idle breeze, stood leaning against the side of the smithy door idly gazing into vacancy.

There were good possibilities evident in Nat's square, manly face. It showed no marks of deep thought it is true, and to the practiced eye was plainly indicative of a not very great nor harassing experience mentally, but it was good-humored and strong, from the broad brow with the frank, direct eyes beneath, down to the rather large nose and wide mouth and the firm, massive chin which was not so ugly but seemed as powerful as a bulldog's. Below, beginning with a round, columnar neck, the figure was that of a young Hercules; and was planted on broad, wholesome feet which might clearly be relied upon in any emergency.

The fire in his forge was slowly dying out as his reverie grew deeper, notwithstanding the fact that he was doubtless thinking of nothing at all. He had simply yielded to the influences surrounding him, and having a clear conscience, generally speaking, toward God and man, was steeping himself like a well-kept animal in an atmosphere of perfect comfort and content.

At last a sound, hollow and thumping came from the east, and rousing himself to glance down the street, Nat saw a horse with a rider approaching him at a leisurely gait in harmony with the day and the scene. The hollow, thumping noise was explained by the fact that the horse was crossing the small, mud-covered wooden bridge which spanned Eagle Creek, a few hundreds of yards off. Nat was a young man to have a shop of his

own—he was barely twenty-three—but he was quick of apprehension, which explained his success, perhaps.

“Tom Bailey,” he said to himself, keeping his eyes on horse and rider; “on Bill’s horse. Shoe off; left hind foot. Queer, how that old sorrel can’t never keep a shoe on like any other horse;” and he turned to pump his bellows and blow his coals into life. “Wonder if he wants a new shoe?” and he glanced over his shoulder at his approaching visitor—“No, Tom’s got the old one with him.” He rolled down his apron, gave his coals a pat or two with a short iron rod lying on the forge, and turned to greet his customer.

“Seems to me if Bill had just one more horse like that one he’d save money if he’d keep a blacksmith on his farm, wouldn’t he?”

“I don’t s’pose he’d lose much if he did—old Blaze can kick off shoes faster than Bill likes to pay to have them put on again, I notice,” and the rider, a boy just approaching manhood, slid off the horse’s side as he came to a halt. After throwing the reins of the blind-bridle over the hitching-post he handed the cast shoe to the smith, who, glancing at it for a moment grasped it with his tongs and thrust it into the fire, while he resumed work with the bellows handle.

Tom Bailey was apparently rather delicate and verging upon the age of twenty. In point of fact he was healthy and strong and not much over seventeen. He was of a light build and medium height, with small hands and feet and limbs moulded like a girl’s. The spring sun had already begun to tan him, but beneath his hat his skin showed white and clear where his short, silky curls allowed it to be seen. His nose was straight and thin, but with generously expansive nostrils; his mouth was sensitive and mobile and as tender as a woman’s, with a short upper lip that could curl as scornfully as a maiden’s while the fairly rounded and well set chin was as innocent of a beard as a baby’s.

“You’d have laughed till you died to see how old Blaze got rid of that shoe yesterday morning. Bill wanted me to go over to Jackson’s to see if the boys would come to the barn-raising and so he sent Pete Schultze down to

curry Blaze off. Blaze would rather have me curry him than anybody else, but he hates Pete somehow, like poison. I thought there'd be fun; so I poked around a little and sure enough, in about two minutes there was the thunderinest racket in the barn you ever heard, and Pete came piling out, hair on end, as if the Old Scratch was after him. 'Got in himmel! dot horse was kill me!' I just laid down and rolled over with laughing."

"Bully for Blaze! He's an American, that horse is, and don't want no kraut-eatin' Dutchman around him. Did he hurt him?"

"No. He kicked his shoe off though, and as Aunt Sallie wants to drive over the Corduroy Road down to John's to-morrow, Bill told me to fetch him in and get him shod."

"Sorry he didn't give the Dutchman just one welt for luck," answered Nat, as he lifted Blaze's foot and began to pare the horny hoof.

"Bill was awful mad," said the boy. "He cussed the Dutchman till all was blue for awhile and then he turned on me because I laughed."

"What did he say to you?"

"Oh, he said I'd never amount to anything—that mother had spoiled me sending me to school so much, and all that sort o' thing he always says when he gets mad."

"Why, you hadn't done anything!"

"That made no difference. He let me have it all the same."

"I'll bet a little red apple you got even with him."

"Oh, I don't know," answered Tom, with an indolent curl of the lip. "I don't say much to Bill when he gets into a tantrum, nor at any other time, for the matter of that. You see he's my uncle, if he is only ten years older than I am, and I don't like to say anything disrespectful to him, and I never do except when he pushes me too hard. What's the use? I don't care what he says so long as he don't fling out too much about the way mother brought me up. He has no business to do that. She's been dead a year now, and if she did have too good an opinion of me its none o' his business. I don't care what he thinks o' me."

A pause ensued, during which Nat deftly shaped the shoe and fitted it to the hoof.

"Must be mighty hard—whoa, there, you great club-footed fool!—mighty hard to have to keep on good terms—hand me that hammer, will you?—not that one, the other—with him."

"I don't have to."

"But suppose he turns you out."

"He can do that just as soon as he pleases. I'd be a fine specimen if I couldn't get along without Bill Bailey! What in the world did you make those corks so sharp for?"

"They *are* sharp, ain't they?" replied Nat, looking at the shoe with great satisfaction. "The next time he gets a whack at that Dutchman he'll leave his mark on him or I'm no blacksmith."

Again a hollow thumping sound smote the ear, but this time the blows upon the bridge fell fast and told of a high rate of speed.

"Hello! a runaway I reckon. No, it's Jim Druett. What the devil—he went over to Bryan's Station this morning early." Bryan's was the nearest telegraph station—fifteen miles distant. "Why he'll kill that horse!"

"They've fired on Fort Sumter and the President has issued a proclamation for seventy-five thousand soldiers!" shouted Jim, as he reined in his reeking steed.

"That's me!" ejaculated Nat, as he threw off his apron, put on his hat and started for the street.

"And me, too," said Tom, in a low tone, without immediately changing his attitude.

"What are you going to do, Nat?" asked Jim.

"I'm going to ring the bell," was the quiet reply, and in a moment Nat had traversed the half-square between his shop and the courthouse, and instantly the bell begun to clamor with a noise that might have waked the dead.

The shopkeepers left the serenity of their quiet shelves; the women and maidens came to the door; the shoemaker dropped his last, the carpenter his jackplane, the doctor his *Medical Review*, the preacher his text; the

boys out of school pocketed their marbles and scurried on to the courthouse square; the boys in school left off the making of spit balls and sat on nettles; the school-master raised his brows for an instant and then dropped them and tried to look unconscious of anything extraordinary in the atmosphere; the streets began to fill and—still the bell kept on. The county officials, like rats leaving a cheese, thronged into the corridor of the courthouse; the lawyers from their dens joined them. With one consent it was agreed that beyond dispute something had happened. What it was no one knew at first, for Jim had gone to the stables with his horse, leaving his work to be carried on by Nat, while nobody thought to say anything to Tom, who sat unconcernedly on an empty dry-goods box on the corner, lazily watching the bees as they buzzed out of their hive.

Something had happened—everybody knew that, but nobody knew just what—and in the uncertainty this something loomed up with startling possibilities. Here and there a man had hard work to keep his teeth from chattering, as the mysterious insistence of the bell grew more and more impressive, and almost every one felt a chilly sensation travel up and down his spinal column. It wasn't a fire—the bell was not ringing the fire alarm. Perhaps it was a murder.

That it meant war perhaps not one in the now populous street had the slightest notion, for, while many were ripe for a fray with the South, and war talk had been plentiful, it is true, for some time, yet there had been so much of it and for so long a time that very few attached any significance to it. They had grown accustomed to it, and had a quiet conviction that the troubles between the North and the South would somehow be arranged without a war after all. At last, as with one mind, the mass moved quickly toward the public square, and Aleck Anderson climbed to the cupola.

"What in the world is the matter?" he asked.

"Here, take hold of this rope and keep 'er going. I'm going downstairs."

"But what does it mean?" again demanded Aleck, complying nevertheless with Nat's command and pulling lustily at the rope.

"It means war. They've fired on Fort Sumter, and the President has called for soldiers, volunteers"—and Nat was gone, while the clangor of the bell took on fresh vigor and a more alarming tone.

At the bottom of the stairs Nat met Lawyer Jordan, short, stout, scant of breath, important and fussy.

"What's that bell ringing for?" he demanded imperiously.

"'Cause there's a fellow pulling the rope," and Nat passed on. Lawyer Jordan followed.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked.

"It means war. They've fired on Fort Sumter, and the President has called for volunteers."

A murmur ran through the crowd as the words, uttered in a clear, loud voice, were understood by all.

"Well, what of it? Why should the bell be rung?"

"So's to get the boys here. Clayton ain't going to be left behind. We're going to raise a company and send a dispatch to-night from Bryan's to the government that we're ready for marching orders."

"Who gave the orders? Who's doing this?"

"I am."

"By whose authority?"

"By my own authority. The authority of Jigadier Brindle Nathaniel Kellogg, Esquire, blacksmith."

"Why, you've no right——"

"Oh, you be d—d!" And the crowd laughed in a nervous way, showing increasing excitement.

"You're impudent—you're—you're—sassy," fumed Lawyer Jordan, dropping into the vernacular in his bewildered heat.

"Of course I'm sassy. It stands me in hand to be sassy. It stands all of us in hand to be sassy. We've got to lick the South, and we can't do it if we're not sassy."

"Hurrah for Nat!" cried the crowd.

"Yust so goot dot I got my drum out," said a voice.

"That's right, Dutchy," said Nat. "Go get your drum and beat it all over town, and tell the boys to come here right away. There's one Dutchman that's good for something, anyhow," he added, as he turned and led the way into the courtroom.

The crowd followed him, and more came; men pale and excited, women red and apprehensive and children round-eyed and curious. They found their tongues, and the jargon of Babel ensued, in the pauses of which the Dutchman's drum was heard rattling in the streets as he marched about with a queer, mechanical, wooden sort of a step, which he had learned in his Fatherland.

"Well, Captain Kellogg," said satirical Lawyer Jordan, as the room became crowded to suffocation and time passed rapidly away, while nothing was done, "you've got us here, what do you intend to do with us?"

"We want to enlist—you're a lawyer—tell us how to do it," said Nat, feeling that perhaps after all his enterprise had outgrown him.

"You can't expect it on such short notice," returned the lawyer. "This is a very serious matter. We want to consider it calmly. I'm quite willing to explain this thing to our people, but I must have time to prepare myself. If you will wait till to-morrow night we can do things decently and in order. By that time—although it is very short notice—I will have a speech prepared——"

"Oh, speech be bothered!" cried Nat. "We don't want no speeches—the time for talk has passed," and he stepped up to the judge's bench.

"Fellow citizens!" he began in a loud, formal way, after he had rapped the assemblage to order. "No, I don't mean that—that's too Fourth of July—I mean—boys, the Southerners are mad because Abe Lincoln, the rail-splitter, was elected President, and they think that cooks their goose on the nigger slave business, and I reckon it does. So they've gone to work to bust up the government. They say they can lick us. They think because they don't do no work that one of them can lick five of us. Maybe they can and maybe they can't. We'll give 'em a whirl anyhow just for luck. They sneer at us because we work, and earn our living in the sweat of our brows, according to Scripture. They call us 'mudsills,' that's what they call us, and think that us men who work for our living while they live off of the work of their nigger slaves like a lot of sneaks—they think we won't fight. Maybe they're right, but I guess

they ain't. The President wants volunteers and he wants a company from Clayton. Here's a piece of paper, and every man who puts his name on it means that he will go for a soldier. This ain't no time for frills and spread-eagle and flapdoodle. There's my name. Now who's the next fellow?"

"Here he is," said Tom, standing at Nat's elbow.

"Bully for you," replied Nat, and he stepped aside to make room for the young men who came thronging forward to enlist.

CHAPTER II.

THE JUDGE'S DAUGHTER.

THE judge's daughter was tall and fair, with blue eyes that were of great depth and earnestness; and perhaps they never showed so much of the latter quality as when the young woman was inclined to be just a little bit coquettish. Alas! she was a daughter of Eve and therefore what else could have been expected of her? But she never carried her coquettish tendencies beyond a safe line. She kept her conscience clear and her dignity and self-respect unimpaired. The boldest antagonist she ever encountered never dreamed of becoming familiar. He flirted with due decorum as a courtier might take his proper pleasure with the queen.

As merry a girl as all America could show, Margaret Henderson never became "Maggie," even to her chosen companions. The closest of them sometimes in their gushing moments called her "Margie;" but it is clearly to their credit that this very absurd diminutive never became popular with them. The old judge himself always said "Margaret" and his dignified utterance of the name had in it a lingering tenderness which his acquaintances knew well how to account for. It was not strange that the name borne by two such noble women as the mother and the daughter should grow to be dear to him—nor would the circumstance that the mother had slept peacefully for long years under tangled grasses and a weeping-willow in the low graveyard by the river side be calculated to make him less reverential when he took her name upon his lips.

The judge's daughter was tall and fair and twenty; and she lived a quiet, tranquil, and very happy life with her father in the great, red-brick mansion which stood back

from the street, surrounded by large and well-kept grounds. The house was the finest in the village and one of the oldest; having been built when the judge was a thriving middle-aged lawyer; before he went on the Supreme Bench, and the year after he married Margaret's mother, the delicate lady whom he found and won at Columbus, the State capital in the last year of his service as attorney general. The judge had retired of his own will from the bench upon the adoption of the constitution of '51, and pursued a studious, uneventful career, devoted to his daughter his books and the care of orphans' estates, left to his charge by loving parents who appreciated his integrity no less than his shrewdness as an investor and manager.

Judge Henderson had no doubts as to his perfect knowledge of his daughter. No father ever has such doubts if he is a loving father; and Judge Henderson loved Margaret so much that it may be said that he lived for her. But he had not the key to the strong and noble nature of the girl, whatever he may have imagined in his fondness. That key was held by another, who used it to unlock the heart of the maiden and walk into its sacred precincts and take up his abode there, long before either he, the lucky fellow, or Margaret herself suspected the fact. And that man was Miles Bancroft, the young lawyer who had settled down in Clayton only a year or two before the time at which this story opens.

Miles Bancroft dropped down in Clayton at the close of a summer's day, "as if," to use the common expression in which the Claytonians were wont to formulate the fact of his sudden appearance, "he had dropped down from the clouds." In order that there shall be no mistake as to the meaning of these good people, it is only fair to explain that while they located heavenly appertainings in the skies, they had no thought of attributing angelic qualities or celestial attributes to the newcomer. They merely meant to convey the idea that he came suddenly, unheralded, and nobody knew where from. The fact that the burning curiosity to know all about him with which the town was consumed and for a time well-nigh distracted was never gratified by its object, had the

effect to fill their minds with suspicion, as all will admit was right and proper; which, with the broader-minded gradually wore off into a feeling of liking, despite Bancroft's manifest peculiarities, but with the narrower grew into a doggedness of dull dislike where it did not rise to a sort of a fearsome and sullen respect.

Did not that fact at once stamp him as wrong? His habits differed from the habits of the male Claytonians. If that did not prove that he was dangerous did it not go far to show that he was at least a fool? He was always "bowing and scraping"—he took his hat off to the women—"haw! haw!" It was well known in Clayton that these "French airs" were sure indications of a namby-pamby, unmanly spirit. He was gentle and unobtrusive in his demeanor. Did not that show that he lacked in the genuine virtues of manhood? Could it be possible that a man who was at pains to keep his nails clean and whose hands were white was really a man of courage—the equal of the brave bluff fellow who scorned soap and water only less than he did personal danger? He talked "school talk." The home-bred Clayton lawyer never dared to place himself so far above the people till he had reached middle life and had been at least a candidate for the legislature. "Every day talk" was good enough for honest people. It was expected of the schoolmaster and the preacher and Judge Henderson who had been on the Supreme Bench and might go to congress "any time he was a mind to say the word," or even the doctor (but in the latter case it would be wise not to go too far), to talk smoothly and elegantly; but the young man who wanted to become popular and make his way in the world oughtn't to put on too many airs! Then what right had he to laugh and shift the subject so adroitly when the conversation took a turn that threatened to become personal to himself? There was something wrong about him or he would have been glad to tell all about himself. Besides, he was "so infernally stiff." There was nothing genial and companionable about him. If he was too "stuck up" to loaf in the grocery with the boys and play seven-up for the whiskey, could there be any good in him? And then he sung tenor in the choir; and the

girls—what a lot of geese women are anyhow! Have not you and I had our opinion of the tenor, my friend, as we have listened to the enthusiastic prattling of fair ones whose faces, ah me! rise sweet and gracious out of the mists of the past?

So, you must see that Miles Bancroft had to fight his way. He did it manfully too; and while at the time of which we write he had not won universal popularity, his condition was mending. He had a sharp struggle for business; for it stands to reason that these fellows who are so finicky about their person can't know anything! If Judge Hendley had not assigned him to the defense in a murder case which no one else would undertake, the accused being a friendless fellow with everything against him, Miles would probably never have had any business offered him. But he showed himself so good a lawyer and so strong a man that he routed all the cunning of the cruel prosecuting attorney; tore to shreds the skillfully woven mesh of circumstantial evidence with which the trembling wretch was surrounded and in which he was choked to death, and made such a rousing speech to the jury that the populace fairly cheered with enthusiasm when the verdict of acquittal was brought in. When Judge Henderson came down from the bench where he had a seat through the courtesy of the presiding justice and shook Miles by the hand and complimented him and told him that he must allow him to become acquainted with him, there was no one in the courthouse who did not rejoice; although some of them repented of their hasty enthusiasm when cool reason afterward showed them that he was still, after all, in default in the matter of dress and manners and his personal history.

His change of fortune did not come any too soon. He needed it. The small store of money which he had brought with him and had husbanded so economically, had pretty nearly all disappeared. His coat had grown shiny from brushing and he needed the money he begun to make; for, among other things, and as if to crown his good luck, the judge invited him to his house to dinner and there he met the judge's daughter.

In truth Miles might just as well have yielded his

story to Clayton, for it was the simple one of a young man who, born in Boston, had been educated at Harvard and finished at the law school just as his father died, leaving him a few hundred dollars and the world before him. He had dropped into Clayton by the merest accident, trusting to luck to choose his home; and had got his blood up when the people showed such a prickly side to him. He determined to conquer them and to do it without telling them anything about himself either; not because he wanted to conceal anything, for there was nothing in his history that he was ashamed of, but because it was "none of their business." He did tell his story, however, to the judge and to the judge's daughter, and as I have said before, he soon came to love the latter. This happened to be about the time that she fell in love with him; although, perhaps, she was as unconscious of her feeling as he was consumed and made wretched by his.

But up to the afternoon when Nat Kellogg rang the courthouse bell with such lusty vigor no word of love had passed between the two.

And poor Tom, too, was in love with the judge's daughter. I don't know why he was, unless it was because he had no business to be. But he was. And Margaret knew it, too; and she did not know whether she was glad or sorry that the boy had been so unwise. Perhaps this was because every maiden likes to be loved, and she thought that as he was such a boy he would get over it in time without hurt. She liked him very much. She had known his mother, a gentle, refined and loving little woman who had lived a life of devotion to her strange, bright boy, and when the mother died Margaret thought that Tom would find it pleasant, perhaps, to be with her occasionally—pleasanter than at his uncle's where the surroundings were rude and unattractive. And Tom was glad to go, and fell in love with the kindly, gracious young woman as readily as the bud opens at the touch of the sun. But of course he said nothing. Aside from the fact that he thought that a great gulf was fixed between them by the disparity in their ages, he really felt a lazy pleasure in his passion which, at the least, might be marred if he revealed it. The occasional jealous pang

that he felt sometimes when he met Miles Bancroft at the judge's only heightened his ardor and strengthened his love. He didn't like Bancroft. He thought Miles patronized him—perhaps he did. And then he was a little jealous, of course. He did not dislike Miles because of the reasons that had set so many Claytonians against the young lawyer. On the contrary he approved of those things which others regarded as objections. But he was always uncomfortable when he found the handsome, polished, patronizing young man *tête-à-tête* with Margaret.

Calling upon Margaret in the evening Miles told her all of the events of the day. In the effort to resist her impulse to analyze the feelings with which she received his announcement that he had enlisted, she remembered that Tom had promised to call that evening and was already overdue. She wished he would come—and then she hoped he wouldn't.

But she could have spared herself if she had known what she learned the next morning. At the moment he was due at the judge's Tom was riding Blaze without a saddle at a terrific pace over the Corduroy Road through the swamp. He was going to Bryan's to telegraph to the government at Washington that a company of volunteers were awaiting orders in the village of Clayton, Shawnee County, Ohio.

CHAPTER III.

HER TWO BEST FRIENDS.

THE judge had begun life as a schoolteacher in New York State, qualifying himself by assiduous application to his books at the country school in the winter when the exigencies of farm work justified his father in giving him relief from field tasks. He was naturally methodical and devoted every spare moment to his studies. He was "born old," in the opinion of the companions of his youth who looked back in after years to realize that he displayed in his boyhood the wisdom and foresight and prudence which came to them only after they had spent half the number of years allotted to man in buffeting the world. With the money he earned at teaching he after awhile, being in his minority, "bought his time" of his iron-featured old father and going to the nearest county town entered upon the study of the law, and at last, upon its practice. Frugal and careful as he was, it was several years before he had amassed enough money in this way to warrant him in seeking a life-home in a new country; but at last his dream was realized and at Clayton he found the elbow-room professionally and otherwise that he desired so much.

He struck his root down deep and strong; invested every dollar he could save (and it was simply wonderful how many the poor young lawyer *could* save) in the cheap lands in the neighborhood. A few years more found him the possessor of quite a large number of acres which were steadily and rapidly growing in value. Then he saw that he could afford to reach out for honors, since the material part of his life was tolerably well provided for, and he entered politics—confining his aspirations, however, strictly to the line of his profession. It

was not till his youthful frugality and his judicious investments begun to bear fruit in a round money income that he relaxed his watchfulness over his expenditures, and gave a tolerably loose rein to his natural liking for the good things of this world and the easy side of this life.

Such a man as this is not apt to be overindulgent or charitable with young fellows who were "born young," and who spend many years in battling with difficulties brought on by their own heedlessness before they learn that lesson of life which is the sternest that can be taught to an easy nature. He never stops to reflect that he was "born so," and will not understand that the majority of mankind were sent into the world but imperfectly equipped in comparison with himself.

All this is to make it clear to my patient reader why it was, when Miles Bancroft came, with a delicate courtesy not usual in that day or locality, to ask permission to pay his addresses to Margaret with the ultimate object of winning her for his wife, that the judge refused to sanction his suit.

He did not deny Miles the house; but he insisted that the young man should do no wooing for a time yet. He had, he explained, been much pleased with many of the traits he had discovered in Miles, and was disposed to think that his career would be a useful and an honorable one. He knew that he would make a strong, good lawyer if he continued to apply himself to his profession. But whether he would so apply himself remained to be seen. He might or he might not. The fact that during the two years of his residence in Clayton he had been studious and well-behaved was to Miles' credit, but it did not prove his character so conclusively as the judge would like. It might be merely a spurt. He had known men to go to the dogs after all, with a much longer record of usefulness than that. He did not predict that Miles would do so. He would not be justified in such a prediction. But, he put it, to the chagrined young fellow, between man and man, was he not wise in asking a further demonstration of the character of the suitor for Margaret's hand, a demonstration that time alone could

give, before he could consent to part with the daughter whom he loved so dearly?

When a cool, wise old father places an ardent young fellow in a situation like this he does him an injustice. The ardent young fellow knows in the depths of his soul that he thinks the cool, wise old father is too hard on him, asks too much, and is just as capable of judging at the moment as he would be ten years later. This is what he knows and what he would like to say. But he is compelled to say just the contrary, and he does say it; and if he has sufficient breath and presence of mind left him, he tries to utter a few words of adroit praise and feigned admiration for the wisdom of the old gentleman's views in the premises. This is what Miles did, and then he wrung the judge's hand as if he were the dearest friend he had on earth; and walked away denouncing himself as a fool, a craven, a liar, and a creature without an atom of self-respect.

And the farther he walked the more enraged he became with both parties to the interview. What right had the old man to so coolly set out a lot of insulting doubts about him and his character? The mere circumstance that he had gone to him to ask permission to make love to his daughter gave no such right. He was conscious of as perfect integrity and uprightness of purpose as any man could have. And Miles halted on the corner debating whether it would not be a wholesome thing for the judge as well as himself if he should go back to the house and tell the self-righteous old fellow just what he thought about it, and that if he *was* poor and *had* never been on the Supreme Bench he was just as honest a man as if he were seventy years old and he didn't propose to be insulted simply because he had made an honorable offer for a girl's hand—and all that sort of thing. But he showed prudence for once, in recalling the fact that the judge held a very heavy advantage over him, and in deciding that he had better, perhaps, wait a little while. Things might change.

And then Miles swallowed the biggest lump that ever stuck in his throat—and grew cold and half-sick and remarked a sort of a greenish tinge in the yellow of the

sunshine; and kept on walking till he found himself at supper time miles out of town, in the black mud and the night falling.

It was the recollection of this interview of only a week previous that prevented Miles from falling upon his knees to Margaret at about the same moment that Tom hitched Blaze's blind-bridle to the post in front of the tavern at Bryan's and rushed down to the station to telegraph to Abraham Lincoln that the Clayton boys were awaiting his summons to serve the country. The young woman did not realize, perhaps, how much feeling she displayed in her voice and eyes as she discussed the fact that Miles had enlisted and would go off to the wars very soon, it might be before daylight—whenever the summons came. And Miles did not hesitate to believe that this feeling which Margaret showed so plainly was a proof that she loved him. He never for a moment thought that an intelligent, tender-hearted, patriotic young girl ought to be very much distressed at the fact that her native country was about to be plunged into a war, and, worse than all, an internecine strife, wherein brother would be arrayed against brother and the father might perchance seek to slay the son. No. He didn't dream of thinking anything of the sort. He only realized that all at once the swift change in circumstances had intensified his love, and hers too, he was sure. And he burned with a fever that raged like the seething of a volcano to throw himself at her feet with his manly avowal, clasp her in his arms and then let the judge make the best he might of it. But he remembered his interview and that he had voluntarily put himself under bonds not to speak without the father's sanction and he restrained himself.

And when the judge came in to join in the conversation, showing such grave concern and patriotic solicitude for the future of the country, how the young man listened and acquiesced! with what an air of respectful interest he caught without understanding, every word that fell from the judge's lips and echoed every sigh that came from the old man's heart! How he toadied to him and abased himself, cursing his own stupidity and lack of manhood the while.

A sleepless night does not cool such a fever as raged in Miles Bancroft's veins. What a volume it would take to record all that passed through his mind as the long, tedious hours dragged on! How many times did he review his life, noting its failures and belittling its successes! And, always, his thoughts came back to the events of the short week just passed. His o'ermastering love for Margaret Henderson; his painful interview with the judge; last night's episode, with its mingled honey and wormwood—the sweetness of the little proofs the maiden unconsciously gave him that she loved him and the bitterness of the struggle he had with himself during the entire evening; his enlistment and all that it involved. He might be dead thirty days hence.

Ay! Then why should he wish to embarrass this young girl with his love?

"Come now, old fellow! If you go away without saying anything about your passion, and never come back—get killed—why, she may feel bad for a little while, but she will get over it and one of these days the right man will come along, the man who will be worthy of her, as you are not, and the old judge, confound him! will give his consent, offhand, and she will marry and be happy! And once in awhile she will think of you tenderly and perhaps even lovingly as you lie sleeping on the sunny hillside hundreds of miles away. For surely, if she loves you now, she will never forget you, even if she does love another after you are gone, and marries him. The feeling she will have for you will be a chastened and holy thing—very much better than the love for the living which is of the flesh, fleshly, of the earth, earthy! It is better so!

"Besides, what good would it do you to tell her that you love her? And how much harm may it not do her? Suppose you had told her to-night. You would have mumbled and stammered and done yourself much less than justice. The sweetness of your happiness would have been imbittered by the thought that at any time, in an hour perhaps, you would have to leave her. It would do you no good. And it would give her pain to separate from you so soon after your mutual love had

been confessed. Honestly, now, would the momentary satisfaction to you compensate for the pain she would suffer? Why not go off like a man, carrying your burden with you and bearing its weight alone—would not that be much better than to thrust a part of it upon her weak shoulders? How infernally selfish love makes a man!

"No. I won't tell her! That is settled! She shall never feel a pang such as the avowal at such a time as this might bring her!

"But, my God, how can I help it!"

And so the young fellow got up at daybreak, hollow-eyed and nervous, and went out into the streets which were filled with anxious, excited men and women and children who revelled in the awful fact of impending war which they could not understand. The people gathered in knots and groups and talked with pale faces of the gaunt possibilities which had so suddenly sprung up before them. The horror that filled the air was redoubled by the stories that fertile-tongued rumor sowed thick and fast. The events that afterwards came were more than anticipated by these narrations which sprung from and had no other foundation than the nervously excited imaginings of a people wholly unused to war. It was a time of terrible trial to everybody and it was made worse by the existence of a class, few in numbers it is true, but bitter in venom, who arrayed themselves against the sentiment in favor of the preservation of the Union, and predicted dire disaster to any attempt to put down the rebellion by force of arms. Good people who lived through those dreadful days pray that they may never be repeated in any nation, among any people.

Tom rode like *Tam-o'-Shanter* to Bryan's. A call was made for a volunteer to carry the dispatch and Tom was ready.

"What will Bill say to your using Blaze without asking?" queried Nat.

"I don't care what he says," replied Tom, as he vaulted on the bare back of his steed and gave him a cut with his apple-tree sprout.

"When will you be back?" shouted Nat, as the horse sprang to his work.

"In the morning," came the reply from the flying boy.

The shades of evening were already falling and the swamp was a darksome place on a moonless night, but Tom and Blaze had traveled the road so often that they had no fears. It was 8 o'clock when the lights of Bryan's came in view, and the train from the east had just got in. The railway station was thronged with an eager crowd listening to the reports brought in by the few travelers who stopped off, the sidewalks were filled and a band of effervescing patriots were working off their enthusiasm by tramping through the muddy streets, led by a fife and drums whose booming Tom had heard, borne to him on the still evening air, miles away. Tom saw that he would not be able to get to the railway station with his horse, so he alighted and left the animal in front of an adjacent tavern and made his way slowly through the crowd to the window of the telegraph office.

"What have you got there, young feller?"

"A dispatch for the President of the United States," said Tom stoutly, with a vague feeling that he was asserting the integrity of the Union and affirming the supremacy and inviolability of the national government.

"What does it say?" demanded the voice.

"It says that a company has been formed at Clayton to fight the Secessionists, and they're waiting for orders!"

A mighty roar of applause went up from the crowd and spread and repeated itself throughout the neighborhood, and roared again, and was answered by the patriots who were marching through the muddy streets and who made response without stopping to inquire why, but simply shouted on general principles.

After spending an hour drifting about the town and gathering up the news and rumors, Tom remounted Blaze and started homeward with a strange feeling of boyish elation which found a vent in urging the tired steed to a much faster pace than was necessary, seeing that he had all night to get home in.

When he got there he found Bill and Aunt Sallie sitting up awaiting him, and was glad to find that in the unwonted feeling produced by his wonderful news Bill forgot to quarrel with him for having taken the sorrel on a thirty-

mile trip without asking permission. He was also gratified to see that Bill made no objection to his enlistment, while his lip curled slightly at the indifference which his worthy uncle showed and which Tom thought proceeded from a feeling of relief at the prospect of getting rid of him.

At 1 o'clock in the afternoon of the following day a reply to their dispatch was received by the Clayton Volunteers. It came from the governor of the State, to whom the Washington authorities had referred the dispatch sent by Tom. Clayton had ignored the doctrine of State's rights with a vengeance. The governor directed through his adjutant-general, that the Clayton Volunteers should embark on a railway train at Bryan's the next morning at 4 o'clock to be transported to Columbus, where they would be mustered in and armed.

On receipt of this order Tom thought, for the first time in twenty-four hours, of Margaret, and forthwith started to the judge's house to say good-by. On the way, however, the suggestion occurred to him that as he was going to the war and might get killed he would buy a keepsake or so for Aunt Sallie and her chubby children, who all loved him and might like to have something to remember him by. This little shopping occupied him at the jeweler's and bookstore for twenty minutes or half an hour.

Miles Bancroft had no one to buy keepsakes for, and consequently did not lose any time. He also started at once for the judge's house. All of his good resolutions were swept away by the announcement that the company would march to Bryan's that night. With a conscious feeling of guilt he hated himself most heartily as, seeing the judge leave his gate to go down the street to learn the cause of the renewed excitement, he realized that his heart grew lighter and his spirits rose.

"I am a coward," he said to himself, "to rejoice that the old man is out of the way."

Nevertheless he kept on his course, feeling at every step that he was plunging deep into a yawning abyss of dishonor that had suddenly opened before him. He rang the bell and was immediately admitted to the parlor

where Margaret sat with a paler face and a more troubled expression than she had ever worn before. She rose hastily.

"Oh, Mr. Bancroft, is there any more bad news?"

"On the contrary, Miss Henderson, there is good news."

"Thank Heaven! There is to be no war——"

"Oh, yes, there is to be war—that can't be disposed of so quickly."

"Then what is the good news? Oh, I know, the government doesn't need any more soldiers and the Clayton Volunteers will not be called out——" with eager anxiety.

"Would that be good news?"

There was an abruptness amounting almost to gruffness in the young man's speech, something unusual in him; and it accompanied a manner with which it was in harmony, a behavior that was almost rude and quite foreign to the air of repose which ordinarily was a marked characteristic of the man.

"The best news—except that there would be no war."

"Why don't you want the Clayton Volunteers to go?"

"Why—of course—why, one does not want one's friends to go to war—to be shot at—wounded perhaps—perhaps killed——" and the girl's face grew paler and her eyes dilated at the picture she drew.

"I didn't imagine that there was any one in the Clayton company in whom you took such an interest."

"How can you say such a thing! I know nearly all of them—they are my old neighbors—I have known them all my life. I should feel dreadful to think that they were going to meet such dangers—besides you are a member of the company—and so is poor little Tom, I hear——"

"Poor little Tom who?"

"Why, Tom Bailey."

"Oh, yes. I believe he did join. But he's a boy and will back out just as likely as not."

"Not he. He has the spirit of a lion. But I hope none of you will go."

"This boy seems to be a great favorite of yours."

"He is. He is brave and gentle and generous and strong. But you have not told me your news."

"I came to tell you the news, Miss Henderson. We march at 8 o'clock to-night for Bryan's, where we will take the cars for Columbus."

"Going—so soon!"

She sank into a chair as if suddenly grown faint.

"And I have other news for you."

"No more—bad—news—I hope?"

"That remains to be seen. I have come to tell you before we start——"

Ah! the color is coming back now.

"I have come to tell you that I love you——"

She sits silent and with her eyes on his face. It is impossible to say what effect the blunt declaration has upon her. It is as if she had heard nothing.

"I *must* tell you before I go—I would die if I didn't."

"Mr. Bancroft!"

"Oh, my darling! I have loved you more than my God! You are the noblest woman I ever knew. I asked your father's permission to tell you this, a week ago, but he would not give it."

"And has he since given it?"

"Alas, no!"

"And yet you come to me and tell me—without his knowledge——"

"He would not consent. He is too hard on me—he is unreasonable——"

"My father is never unreasonable. He is the wisest and best man in the world!"

"I mean—have pity on me——"

Tom has completed his purchases and has entered the house, where he is at home as if of the family, without ringing. Casting his hat on the table in the hall he steps upon the threshold. He sees the woman he loves, Margaret Henderson, her figure drawn up to its full height, her head thrown back, her eyes dilated, with her hand upon a chair in front of her, confronting Miles Bancroft, who leans upon the mantelpiece, his hair dishevelled and the veins standing out upon his forehead like whipcords, his face discolored and distorted while his eyes gleam and glow like living coals; and he hears Miles say that his love for Margaret will drive him mad. And with a swift transformation the boy becomes at once a man.

He cannot stand by to listen to more—that would be dishonorable, even if he cared to. He cannot go for he is not sure whether Margaret is alarmed or pleased—the man is like a maniac and his aspect is enough to frighten any woman. He advances into the room with a slight noise at which they both turn to him. Involuntarily Margaret gains his side and lays her hand upon his arm, with a smothered exclamation—"Oh, Tom!"

Tom keeps his eyes fastened upon Miles whom he has never seen look like this before.

"You have been listening!" Miles is livid and he gasps rather than utters the insult.

The boy's eyes flash an instant and his head is lifted quickly with an almost imperceptible movement of scornful indignation. But he controls himself and turn gently and proudly to Margaret:

"I have come to say good-by, Miss Henderson. The company will march to-night."

Where did this backwoods boy get this high bearing? No wonder Miles is amazed and cooled in a breath.

"Oh, Tom, I'm so sorry. You're so young. And you are both going. My two best friends. What shall I do? I can only pray for you—both——"

What a deadly calm has come over Miles! She leads Tom to him.

"You are my two best friends. You must be the best of friends to each other. You will promise me that, will you not? Then I will feel, somehow, that both of you are safer than you would be otherwise. Take each other's hands and promise me, will you not?"

How can Tom take the hand of this patronizing whelp who has insulted him? How can he refuse when Margaret asks him?

"My dear boy, forgive me," cries Miles. "I know you are incapable of such a thing!"

Their eyes and hands meet and they are sworn friends—and yet they both love this woman, and neither dreams of giving her up!

An angry tumult as of men beside themselves and furious as wild beasts comes up the street. There are cries and imprecations borne on the top of this wave of sullen roaring that has the horror of homicide in it!

CHAPTER IV.

SUSIE'S VICTORY.

NAT KELLOGG's shop stood on the corner of a lot which was at the junction of an alley with Main Cross Street, and it was just half a square from the courthouse, as we have seen. The shop itself was not an extensive affair, perhaps fifteen or twenty feet square—big enough to run a wagon into when repairs were needed—and the forge filled the corner where the double doors opened on the street. A back door showed the house ten feet off, which was Nat's home. This latter structure was modest, but neat. It was a story and a half high and was constructed of rough bricks with three rooms on the ground floor and two cozy little sleeping apartments above. It was a fair specimen of most of the Clayton homes. It was rude, perhaps, and contracted, and the floors were covered with a homely rag carpet, save in the parlor, where, under the highly varnished haircloth sofa and chairs, an ingrain with large and grotesque figures in deep crimson and green was spread.

There were no chromos in Clayton in those days, but on the walls of Nat's house were colored lithographs or engravings of slim-waisted young women, in pale pink dresses cut low in the neck and short in the sleeves—such as you will find on a smaller scale in the "Keepsake," that queer-looking book which your grandmother sets such store by. In addition, Nat's parlor was adorned with a picture of Abe Lincoln which was his reward from Horace Greeley for having gotten up a club of subscribers for the *Tribune* during the campaign of '60. On the marble-topped center table which was, like the chairs and sofa, sticky and shiny with varnish, were, first, a woolen mat of bright colors which Nat's wife had

wrought the year before they were married, whereon was set with great unsteadiness a lamp for burning coal oil, that wonderful new illuminant; a large, new black family Bible with a big brass clasp and a family record which showed that Nathaniel Kellogg and Susan Croly were married by a duly licensed preacher of the Baptist persuasion in January, 1859, and that Susan had borne unto Nathaniel, children, viz.: Richard, born in the month of November 1859, and Rosalind who made her advent into this troublous world in the month of February, 1861. (Strangely enough it was practical Nat who had insisted that the daughter should be called Rosalind. During the winter of '60—'61 he had spent the evenings in reading a large print copy of Shakespeare which Tom had loaned him, for he was a great reader and he was captivated with the merry maiden of Arden.) Beside these adornments there were on the table an album wherein Susan Croly's rustic admirers had inscribed much amorous verse, with many laboriously wrought pen-flourishes and pictures of various kinds and degrees of excellence as to execution; prominent among them being wreaths, of which there were four; and birds, full-breasted and bearing in their bills a scroll with such tender inscriptions as "Forget-me-not" and the like. Of these birds there were six, and the best one was done by the writing-master from Cleveland who once spent a winter in Clayton, and who was doubtless responsible for most of the heavy down-strokes and light up-strokes and gracefully curling tails with which each verse of poetic aspiration was finished, as well as the wonderful curlicues which adorned the "g's" and "y's" and finished off the bottom of the page. And it was noticeable that the writing-master's bird was doubtless the mother of all the other birds, so markedly strong was the family resemblance among them. A book of Baptist hymns might sometimes have been found on this table, although it was clearly not considered as one of the permanent ornaments, and was as frequently found on Susan's bureau in her bedroom upstairs or on the mantelpiece in the dining and sitting room alongside the Seth Thomas clock, whose clacking tick was only exceeded for loudness in the still hours of the night by the sonorous clangor of its bell upon which the hours

were rung. A sheet-iron stove with a big door and no attempt whatever at decoration save a medallion in front giving a view of a female scantily attired in a floating scarf and a curly-headed boy not attired at all, completed the furniture of this apartment which was never opened except on Sundays and state occasions—such as Mother Croly's visits with her knitting, a call from the Rev. Mr. Jabez Waterman, the pastor of the church, or an occasional tea given to Susan's old girl-friends who had not as yet gone into matrimony for themselves—and which when closed was kept very dark by means of thick, glossy, green paper window shades.

In the front yard stood two dismal evergreen trees, which Nat, with a patience worthy of a better cause, assiduously strove to teach to grow into the cheerful shape of funeral urns, while a heart-shaped trellis between the window and the door bore, in its season, that dear old vine whereon morning-glories blow. A bed of pinks and sweet-williams and hollyhocks found a place in the summer between the evergreen urns, and, notwithstanding the fact that it was neither an æsthetic time nor place a sunflower or two usually stood in the corner. Back of the house was the kitchen garden, hencoop, cowhouse and pigpen, for the householder in Clayton who did not raise his own pork on his own premises was poor indeed, and it was no more possible to keep house without a cow than without a house in that sensible and comfortable slow-going backwoods village.

Things have changed in Clayton since then and I warrant you that young Dick Kellogg cracks many a joke with his brand-new young wife at the expense of her mother's cow and too convenient pump; while Mrs. Rosalind sighs over her delicate baby and Grandmother Susan says, "No wonder, when the milk is so thin, and thank Heaven *her* children didn't have to depend upon a cow, and she don't know what things are coming to in this world, anyhow!" She thinks "things" were better in the old days; and sometimes Nat agrees with her, for all their big, fine house and the machine-shop with ever so many hands into which the old horseshoeing establishment has expanded.

Dick hasn't got half the arm on him that Nat had at his age and Rosy can't even take care of her baby, let alone do all the housework besides, as Susan did. Still, Dick has married a good girl with a neat sum of money and has the making of a fine lawyer in him if he would only let politics alone and didn't have such a fondness for trotting-horses; and Rosy's husband is a partner in the woolen-mill that has spoiled the water at the old "swimming-hole" that Nat remembers so well.

But we are getting ahead of our story, which deals with the good old times for which Susan sighs so unreasonably.

Susan Kellogg, at the time our story opens, was as plump and round a little brown-eyed body as ever made a husband happy. While Nat was ringing the sparks out at his anvil Susan's song kept time to the strokes of the hammer as she went about her household labors. Nat never understood how much he had grown to lean on her till he had got away off South, hundreds of miles from her. And then he used to think when, as he walked his lonely rounds on picket duty of a dark night, the picture would come up before his eyes of the trim little figure in the neat brown calico dress and white linen collar at the neck, and narrow, spotless cuffs just peeping below the sleeves, standing in the door to call him to the dinner or supper prepared by herself. I say Nat used to think at such times as this picture would come to him, that he never had loved her, never could love her, as she deserved to be loved. And then he would laugh with a laugh that was half-pathetic as he confessed to himself that strong and self-reliant as he was he would be the weakest and most worthless man in the world without Susie. He first recognized the dawn of this feeling when, at about 8 o'clock of the evening that he had led the way in the enlistment of the Clayton Volunteers, in responding to a touch upon his arm, he looked down and saw her by his side.

He had been thoughtful enough to see that a war was imminent and had always known that when it came he would enlist, although he had never formulated the determination and had speculated but little on the effect that his doing so would have upon his domestic affairs.

And when Jim brought him the news that the war had at last begun and the President had called for volunteers he had dropped his hammer to respond without a thought of Susie and the babies. In the excitement that followed during the next few hours he had continued to forget them; and he forgot his supper besides; as did nearly every man in Clayton that evening. The presence of his wife now brought it all upon him like a huge wave that threatened to smother both him and her.

"Why, little woman, God bless you, you startled me! Is the baby sick—is Dick's croup worse?"

"Ain't you coming home to supper?"

"Why of course I am. Is it time? I'm as hungry as a wolf, now I come to think of it."

"Come along then. Supper's been ready these three hours. The baby ain't sick, and Dick's croup is better."

"Who's with them?"

"Aunt Nan's there. She brought down some hoarhound and made Dick some tea."

And right there, somehow, the conversation ceased, and they walked homeward through the dark street in silence. Nat's heart was suddenly filled with a great, inexpressible tenderness which seemed to crowd everything else out, so that the events which had for the last few hours so completely absorbed him seemed as if they were something he dimly remembered to have read about; their very echoes were distant and faint—and his impulse was to pick up the little wife in his brawny arms as he could so easily have done, and kiss her, and let her lay her head upon his breast and weep all those tears away which he knew were lying back of her soft, brown eyes.

But the people of Clayton in those days were wont to be strangely repressive as to their emotions, and were like Indians, in that they seemed to think shame of that indulgence which would display such weakness. So Nat refused to obey the impulse and Susan could not have suspected it, if she had not known how dearly Nat loved her, and if she had not felt his arm holding her hand pressed more tightly than usual to his breast. And so they walked homeward.

And Susie looked out upon an unknown sea and sud-

denly found herself helpless; and its great waves leaped all the more fearfully that she could see such a short distance because of the fog which obscured her future. Out of that fog came sickening imaginings which appalled her—and might well have done so even if she had been more stout-hearted than she was. Nat had never said to her that he would go to the war if a war should come, and she had never seriously thought that such a thing as a war was possible. Why should it be? At the same time she knew now that she had always expected that he would go, if his country called. He had read his *Tribune* faithfully and aloud to her every week, and as the bitterness and desperation of the factions grew fierce his comments showed how deeply he felt.

She could see very well, now, that the strength of his feeling of aversion for the institution of human slavery and of sympathy for the negro bondsman would make him quick and prompt to seize upon an opportunity to wipe out the one and so do God's slow justice to the other.

But it had been so far off and apparently so impossible that she had never given it a thought, serious or otherwise. Only that morning they had discussed at breakfast, their projects for the spring. She had her sewing plans all arranged and had laughed at Nat's remark that it was nonsense to keep a boy in petticoats when he got old enough to walk so well as Dick could. Dick in trousers! And Nat had said that he would plow up the garden next week, and if it kept fair only one day longer he would spade up her flower beds so that she could sow the seed for her morning-glories and her pinks and sweet-williams and hollyhocks, and said he had spoken to Bill Jones for a couple of shoats to put in the pen to fatten for next winter's bacon. And he had promised her that if work was good so that he could pay off the last installment of the mortgage on the house to "Old Ramsey" by fall he would buy her the nicest tea-set of gold-band china that could be had in all Clayton, fully as good as her mother's; and maybe he would throw in a new bombazine dress for her for Sundays; and didn't she think Dick would be big enough to need a pair of red-topped boots to play around in the snow in next winter? And she was

to go "down to mother's" with the children to spend a week during sugar-making, and Nat was to come to spend Sunday — and — and — now all was over! There was nothing that she could see but a black wall of waves, angry and ready to drown her and her dear ones, and nothing that she could feel but a great pain at her heart as if a cruel hand was gripping it so that it almost ceased to beat.

But she mustn't let Nat know it! He was a man and had a man's righteous work to do, and she would cut her right hand off before she would allow an exhibition of her forebodings to be made to weaken his heart or arm.

The children were asleep when they got home, lying side by side in the big cradle Nat had made for them — "might almost just as well a-had twins at once and been done with it, Susie," he had said when he brought it in from the shop; the table was spread and the bacon and potatoes were in the oven keeping hot.

Aunt Nan, the old octoroon, who had been brought from Virginia by Nat's father, and who was the village nurse and doctress, was sitting there looking grave and wise and thoughtful. Susie wished she would go home, when she saw her face and remembered the lugubrious talk she had had with the old woman that evening while she was waiting for Nat; and then her conscience smote her, for Aunt Nan was always ready to come to help her take care of the children when they got sick; and so the little woman's conscience compelled her to exert herself more than usual to entertain her visitor.

But what she feared came; the news had to be discussed, although Susie could see that Nat did not like to talk much; in all its details, Aunt Nan insisted upon hearing it. The trembling wife found it a terrible strain with Nat looking at her with more love than his eyes had ever shown before. But she did very well; and had to reproach herself only once, and that was when Nat answered Aunt Nan that the company might get orders to march before morning. Then, spite of all she could do, she spilled the cream she was pouring into Nat's cup.

"Ah, me!" sighed Aunt Nan. "This war and fighting is an awful thing. People here in Clayton don't know

anything about it. To hear 'em talk you'd suppose it was a kind of a frolic. And so it is s'long's there's nothing but beating of drums and playing of bands and a-marching around with fine clothes on. That's all very pretty, but that ain't war. I lived down to Urbana when the Mexican war was fought, and Colonel James he got up a company there. Everybody was crazy about war when they was parading around. But it was different when the news came that John Crain was killed at Buner Vister, and that George Grant had his whole head shot right off at some other place with an outlandish name that it seems to me never did mean anything."

"Oh, well, Aunt Nan," said Nat, "they didn't all get killed. Some of them did, of course; that's the chance of war that every man's got to take—but the most of them come home again."

"Not the most of them. Colonel James took fifty men from Urbana and only twenty of them got back. They wasn't all killed I know. John Greenlaw he stayed down there in Mexico and they say he married one of them Mexican women—though how he could have the stomach to do that I can't see—for they're heathens—at least they're nearly as bad—they're Catholics and worship images. I don't suppose such a woman as that could have really right children."

"Why, you don't suppose they'd have three legs, do you, Aunt Nan?" cried Nat, anxious to get her off her doleful topic and willing to spend a little cheap wit in the cause.

"'Tain't that. But never mind. 'Tain't the Mexican war we're talking about. John Crain, he had two little children just about the age of Dick and Rosy there, when he went to the war. And Mis' Crain she had to take in sewing for a living till she got that broke down that she had to give it up, and the last I heard of her she was in the poorhouse—the children was 'bound out,' I believe."

This time it was Nat who winced and was anxious that his weakness should not be witnessed.

"We must hope for the best, Aunt Nan. That's the way to do. It don't pay to look on the dark side of

things. This won't be much of a war. I see by the papers that some of the big men in Washington don't think it'll last more'n three months, and they ought to know."

"Nobody knows how long the war will last, honey. They thought the Mexican war wouldn't last long. They was a-going down there and was going to whip them 'Greasers', as they called them, in less'n no time, they said. But it took a long time; and many a poor fellow died there, away from his home and his family; and his children wanting bread to this day, maybe."

"Not so bad as that, I hope," said Nat with a tremor, in spite of himself. "Not so bad as that. The good Lord will take care of them that fights His battles. And if it isn't fighting His battles to free the poor nigger slaves I don't know what is."

"That may be," replied Aunt Nan, who felt her own strong religious nature respond to Nat's adroit stroke, and at the same time had to wrestle a little with the incidents of life which don't always fit in with the theories of good people. "But I've heard 'em say that Bonyparte he said that the Lord was on the side of the most soldiers."

"Ah, but Bonyparte isn't good authority. He was a bloody, butchering fellow who only made war so that he could get to be a big man. Look at the Bible, Aunt Nan, and see how the Lord used to fight on the side of the Jews—His chosen people."

"He ain't been doing much fighting for them lately."

"But they are no longer His chosen people. And besides Bonyparte—why he was just as big a Catholic as anybody!"

But it was of no use. Aunt Nan was keyed in a minor and she only made matters worse the more she talked. Nat and Susie strove hard against her, each for the sake of the other, and both felt relieved when the good-hearted old woman, who meant no harm, took her leave.

And then Susie did feel that she would like to talk all her doubts and fears away with Nat. It would be a relief to her if she could open her heart to him. But she would not, for his sake. And she was glad that the "chores" occupied him till bedtime, and that there was

no moment when they had nothing to do but to look blankly at each other.

But when they had got to bed and the awful thought came to her that maybe this was the last time that ever Nat's arms would hold her to his side, she could not help it any longer. She crept up to him and laid her head on his breast as he had wished her to do, and sobbed a long, long time. Not a word was spoken, but Nat clasped her with a tenderness that showed that he shared her grief and sympathized with all her feelings, and was only restrained from joining his tears with hers by the thought that he was a man and must show himself the stronger of the two. At last the grief grew duller and with contrition she whispered:

"Oh, Nat, I didn't mean to."

"God bless you, my wife!" he replied as he kissed her fervently and solemnly.

And then she slept; while he waited the coming of the day with eyes that would not close.

CHAPTER VI.

LAWYER JORDAN'S MISTAKE.

It was as if a whirlwind had gathered up all the men in Clayton and by its strong centripetal force had made of them a cohesive mass in which each atom was instinct with life but in which a common motion controlled and forced them to do its will as if it was sentient and furiously powerful. For the mass whirled about like a bunch of leaves in a whirlwind; and outside the compact formation men danced and darted to and fro like detached leaves feeling but faintly the force of the centripetal suction. And as it whirled it moved steadily if slowly southward toward the market-house. And the roar of the hundreds of angry men was awful. It was as if the higher nature had left them and they were soulless—beasts and brutes who had no reason and could be moved by nothing higher nor lower than the blind rage which possessed them. There was snarling and snapping and teeth were gnashing; till a sane being with his eyes shut could have readily persuaded himself that he was in the midst of wolves ravenous with hunger and suddenly come upon a prospect of food. The undertone was a dumb, inarticulate noise made with the closed mouth and in each individual sounding like the suppressed groan of pain coming from a desperate man, struggling and fighting for his life and suffering mental as well as physical anguish. This undertone possessed all the attributes of volume and horror, and above it forked and darted the snarling and snapping and the sound of the gnashing of teeth as the blue flames play and sport over the low moaning of molten metal in a furnace. The corruscating of this awful lightning was momentarily rent and torn by

a thunderous roar from red and angry throats, when teeth and lips relaxed or rather were wrenched apart by the maddened strength of an anger that would not longer be restrained. Men's vital forces were put to such terrific stress that they saw things bathed in a horrible color, blood-red, and there was a ringing in their ears more terrible than the sudden clang of a firebell in the solemn hush of deep night. It was a mob of maniacs bent on murder.

It was a mob of men who had been accustomed during all of their lives to hold their passions as well as their weaknesses under the strictest control. Such men when overmastered by passion are compared with men used to yielding to every impulse, as giants to pygmies. The greater force required to break down the barriers sweeps everything before it like a devastation.

Cowards stood behind windows shivering and quaking and looking with inhuman dastard eyes at the beginning of a crime which they did not dare to raise a finger to prevent, as the mob swept whirling by. Women looked an instant on a horror surpassing anything of which they had ever dreamed, and, moaning, covered their eyes and fled to remote hiding-places. Children ran shrieking and gazed from a distance. With their tails between their legs dogs loped yelping away from a ferocity as much more bloodthirsty and vindictive than the ferocity of the animal as the superior intelligence of man could suffice to make it.

Miles and Tom, without releasing their clasped hands, looked from the window as the sullen roar with the horror of murder in it came to their ears, and a moan of terror burst from Margaret's lips. In a moment the three understood everything and the two men scarcely needed the word "Go!" from the maiden to cause them to dart from the house toward the mob. For a moment they hung upon the outskirts, debating without a spoken word upon the best step to take. They had comprehended at a glance the significance of the scene, and knew why the mob drifted toward the market-house. There were stout cross-beams there over which the rope already around Lawyer Jordan's neck could be easily thrown!

For it was Lawyer Jordan in the midst, the very center of this whirlpool of men—and his hands were bound in front of him, his hat was gone and he was bleeding from a wound in his forehead. The white-faced men about him were beyond reason; that was clear, as to all of them save possibly Nat Kellogg, who, though he walked by the condemned man's side and actually held the rope with which Lawyer Jordan was to be hung, was apparently at himself. Bancroft thought he could see that much in the glance he got from Nat's eye and at once decided that the one chance for Jordan's life lay in the brawny blacksmith's hands. With Nat's co-operation everything might be done; without it, nothing. Miles threw his shoulder against a crevice in the crowd and pressing inward left the rest to centripetal force; and without a word between them Tom followed his example.

The fact of the business was that Lawyer Jordan had been talking treason—treason to the government, treason to the cause of humanity and, what was perhaps the worst of all, treason to the Clayton Volunteers.

You need not be told, my dear sir, of the bitterness between the people of the North who were loyal to the Union and those who sympathized with the Secessionists. It was in your day, and you remember it perfectly. Indeed it has scarcely died away yet, and, liberal, progressive, sensible man that you are and pride yourself on being, you smile when you see Deacon Gray and Deacon Brown come face to face in the prayer-meeting and address fervent petitions to Almighty God from the same church floor and respond devoutly in perfect harmony, and yet at the close pass each other with hard, firm-set faces and eyes filled with cold hatred for each other; you smile still more when, as Deacon Brown's stalwart young son and Deacon Gray's blooming, winsome young daughter go off from that same prayer-meeting arm in arm, you observe the two stubborn old fathers pull their hats angrily down over their eyes and, each taking his own side of the street march off stolidly homeward. You laugh, when you ought not to think of laughing, because the grace of the God which the two old men honestly strive to serve, has not softened and sweetened the hearts

which grew so hard and bitter toward each other thirty odd years ago when one was an "abolitionist" and the other was a "copperhead." And you chuckle mischievously as you think of the "pretty kettle of fish" there will be if the two young folks don't make an end of this falling in love with each other; for you know that Gray would rather see his daughter marry the devil than that she should become the spouse of "old Brown's" son, and Brown would prefer that his boy should take a negress to wife if he had no other choice beside than "old Gray's" daughter.

But your grandson doesn't know these things so vividly as you do, impatient old man; and I have him very much more in my eye than you as I write; he will appreciate my book much better than you do, I hope.

There were some localities where there was scarcely a difference of opinion as to the merits of the question between the North and the South, and where the few who dissented from the views of the majority maintained a discreet silence, and peace reigned. There were other localities where sentiment was pretty evenly divided, and there war reigned; not always with bloodshed and yet very frequently; but invariably with a bitterness that still rankles though decades have passed and the actual combatants have fraternized like brothers in arms.

The northwestern part of Ohio where the scene of our story is laid so far, was one of the localities where the Southern sympathizers were a very large minority of the population; and the congressional district in which Clayton was situated had for many years sent men to congress who were very strongly inclined to sympathize with the South, and did so take sides in all the great struggles in the field of politics which brought on, at last, the war of the rebellion. Lawyer Jordan was with the majority in his district if not in the village itself. As has been hinted he had aspirations which nothing less than a national field would satisfy. He had been a long and a loud advocate of the rights of the South and bitter in his denunciation of those who belonged to the other party.

He was conspicuous in the ranks of those who inveighed against the policy of a resistance by force of arms to the

dismemberment of the Union! and had frequently said that if a war came it would not be confined in its devastations to the South, but would be general and fought out in every State in the Union. Men from the North as well as those of the South would take up arms against the national authority, he maintained, and would fight and die to secure to the seceding States the right to set up a separate government. And if he had never said in so many words that he would himself take up arms in behalf of the South, he had said a great deal that would warrant the inference that he meant to do so.

When, the evening before, at the courthouse, Nat had asked him to advise the people how to go about the work of enlisting and forming a company, both the blacksmith and the lawyer were deceived as to the true state of affairs. Nat knew of course that Lawyer Jordan had been classed with the Southern sympathizers and among the most active of them, but he had paid little heed to the circumstance. And when the blow was finally struck, when Sumter was fired on and the President had called for volunteers. Nat at once jumped to the conclusion, without doing any thinking to speak of on the subject, that of course all division of opinion was at an end—that forthwith all would unite in support of the government—that no man would at this last extremity desert his section, no matter how much he had vaped and talked up to that time. He supposed that of course Lawyer Jordan was with him and the rest of his loyal neighbors, now that the war had actually come. So that he made his request for advice in all simplicity and good faith; and even when Lawyer Jordan gave his reply Nat attributed it rather to a desire on the lawyer's part to have a chance to air his oratorical powers than to anything else, and was far from suspecting for a moment the real truth.

For, vain as Lawyer Jordan unquestionably was of his abilities as a speaker, he did not care so much for a chance to show them as he did for something else, viz. : to know precisely which way the cat was going to jump—for he intended to accompany that interesting animal provided he was spared to the exercise of his faculties, if he was personally cognizant of his own state of mind.

If you had asked him that morning, or even so late in the day as the moment at which Nat was so cruelly sharpening the corks on Blaze's shoe with the mutilation of a "Dutchman" in view, if you had asked him then which way the majority of the people in the Clayton district would go in event of a war he would have unhesitatingly told you that they would go with the South; and, if you had given him time he would have demonstrated to you just why they would espouse the cause of secession. For he was a man of parts; among which his parts of speech were very prominent. Then why did he shuffle and waste his opportunity? Why did he not at once take the stand and denounce the Union movement and make head for the South now that she needed friends, as manfully as he had done before the hour of her peril had come? Because he was puzzled and hard put to it to decide whether he should believe the evidence of his own eyes or cling to the theory which he had so often and so satisfactorily demonstrated, in spite of the warnings of his outlying senses.

For, as he came to the courthouse in response to the long-continued ringing of the bell, he observed that many of those who were also hurrying there were those who had followed his lead for years in politics. And when he got within the building he found that the announcement of the cause of the bell-ringing had started a conflagration which spread like a fire in a dry stubble. It consumed not only the seasoned stalks of abolitionism whose condition invited combustion, but to his surprise, and perhaps dismay, he found the green shoots of his own sowing and nurturing, flaming up with rapid and increasing heat. How far would this go? If the sudden breaking out of hostilities had actually united those who yesterday were widely apart, and if this consolidation was going to be a permanent thing, it behooved him to know it; for it behooved him to get on the stronger side at all times. It looked as if everybody was in favor of the hated policy of coercion so far as this sudden light illuminated things.

Still, he wasn't certain about it; and Lawyer Jordan was ordinarily a careful man. Certainly at this juncture he couldn't afford to make a mistake. So he decided to

wait and see what a night's reflection would bring forth. Perhaps in that time his old followers would recall some of the doctrine he had so faithfully preached to them and would see that they were going all wrong, and would return to their allegiance. He would make a pretty mess of it if he, too, yielded to this sudden excitement only to find a few days hence that he had swung away from the majority in the district and had thereby destroyed his future!

So that his answer to Nat was intended as a skillful movement in favor of delay. It was not very much, it is true, but it was as much as he dared to essay at the moment. We have seen, however, that it had no effect, and that in spite of it Nat went ahead and organized his company—if what was done can be so termed.

Lawyer Jordan was not the soundest sleeper in Clayton that night—a night when scarcely an adult in the whole village had undisturbed repose. During the early evening he sent for his party friends, the leaders in the county, and held an anxious conference with them. In union of desire there is strength; and as these gentlemen came together desiring to find a state of facts which would warrant them in believing that their party—the party of sympathizers with secession—would recover itself, and after reflection again present a united front upon the old alignment—as they so much desired this they found abundant data upon which to build something with much more solidity than a mere hope would have. Of course they made a mistake, because they argued only from that which had prevailed for so many years, when men followed, without consideration, the lead of their chiefs and investigated the claims of their party no further than to satisfy themselves that it was the organization to which their fathers had belonged; and they failed to take into account the tremendous effect that the smoke from General Beauregard's gun had had upon the atmosphere by which men's political views were influenced. Of course they made a mistake in assuming that since they had in themselves nothing of genuine love for the Union or regard for the cause of humanity as represented by the

proposition to free the slave, therefore their followers had not. They counted that the effect upon themselves would eventually be the same upon their followers. And they pledged themselves to the faith that was in them, solemnly, hopefully, orally and bibulously and went off to bed calculating with confidence upon the result with their followers of the sober second thought; and without any sort of comprehension of the value and weight of the new factors that had entered into the combination.

But the men who manifested no surprise in perceiving that whereas the night before they went to bed Secessionists, now, the night after, they were going to bed Union men if not actually Abolitionists, found themselves, when day broke, still calm and without thought of a return to the old belief; and set about with swift method getting their affairs in order, as became wise men entering upon an unknown path.

And the fatuity of Lawyer Jordan and his friends and coadjutors continued. They spent the forenoon in discussing the details of a demonstration to make headway against the influences that had set in so strongly against what they conceived were their true interests. It was at last decided that they should divide and mingle among the people and that to Lawyer Jordan should be left the decision as to the time when and the place where, and the manner in which they should reassert themselves and regain the ground that had been lost. Lawyer Jordan was not only the leader by virtue of his superior intelligence, but because, also, he had more at stake politically than any of the rest of them.

It all came about through another mistake on Lawyer Jordan's part. He unwisely seized the opportunity when the American flag was being hoisted into place upon a pole newly set up by the enthusiastic volunteers to deliver himself of sentiments which were derogatory to the government of which the flag was the symbol, denouncing it as a tyranny which would soon be rebuked by the brave men of the South, etc., etc. He really said very little if any more than he had said a thousand times before. But it was received with an ill grace by men who belonged the day before to two widely separated parties, but who

had in the twinkling of an eye become allies of the staunchest and truest description. Still, nothing was said to disturb the lawyer, who did not hesitate to think that the inarticulate murmurs which he heard were really evidences of the good effect he had produced, and that his hearers were supplementing his own arguments with others drawn from their reawakened political consciences. He grew bolder and proceeded with such vehemence and oratorical excellence that the crowd finally became quiet, if not, as he thought, sympathetic listeners.

Lawyer Jordan flattered himself that he could gauge the feelings of a jury as accurately as any man, and this time he congratulated himself upon an unexpectedly easy victory. His coadjutors, who had gathered warily upon the outskirts of the crowd, grew bolder with him and encouraged him with nods and smiles of approbation. And just here the crisis was reached.

With the advocate's shrewd calculation of dramatic effect, and completely deceived by the aspect of his hearers, Lawyer Jordan suddenly seized the flag which he had denounced so bitterly, and casting it upon the ground proceeded to trample it under his foot.

The instant after he had done it Nat Kellogg's iron fist smote him on the forehead with a force that would have been sufficient to kill him had not the blow been a glancing one.

The movement of Nat's arm was not quicker than the flash that sprang into the eyes of the volunteers. With a drawing in of the breath that was more a moan than a roar, they rushed in, and in an instant the lawyer was bound and in another moment the rope with which the flag was to have been hoisted was over his head with the slipknot of a running-noose under his left ear; and in the babel of curses and imprecations that filled all the space the eager cry "To the market-house! Hang him!" gave the command that the maddened men without debate started to execute. White and trembling the poor lawyer looked about for his friends. They were not. They had incontinently vanished. The prayer for mercy that formed itself on his lips was silenced by an imprecation

that was so horrible it seemed to freeze his blood. A minute had not elapsed and Lawyer Jordan was on his way to his death—in the hands of executioners momentarily growing more furious.

His lips were livid and the sweat stood on his brow in great drops, mingling with the blood that Nat's knuckles had drawn. He looked piteously about for a friendly glance. But every eye was stern and implacable. Those who were his followers yesterday seemed the most determined to have his life. In a second of time he had been tried, convicted and sentenced by a court which was hurrying to execute its own sentence with such rapidity that hope had no time to spring up. It was as if the judgment of God had fallen upon him—only worse—for Heaven holds out a hope in repentance to the last.

"My God!" he moaned, "will they kill me?"

"If the devil don't stand up for his own mighty quick they will," replied Nat, speaking plainly from custom and not from a desire to be needlessly cruel. He meant what he said—was not the wretch a lawyer as well as a traitor and therefore doubly bound to Satan? And from where else should help come to such a man?

Nat regretted that he had struck him. He had not supposed that his blow would have such an effect. His passion was gone before his fist had reached its mark. Now, he only thought how to save his neighbors from committing a crime which would forever dishonor them.

His senses were all alert, but he saw no hope till he caught Miles Bancroft's eye. And even then he had no idea how it was to be done.

Neither had Miles at the moment. But he was there, first, because Margaret had sent him, and next because he realized how grave the results would be if the mob was not stayed in time. The sucking swirling of the crowd soon drew him to the center with Tom close behind. Nat greeted him with a look which said, "I understand, and will help!"

In another moment they were in the market-house.

"Put him up on a block!"

"Yes—put him up, curse him, where we can all see him!"

When Lawyer Jordan was raised up on the butcher's block life was nearly extinct—from fright. With one hand Nat threw the rope over a beam and with the other strove to hold up the collapsed lawyer.

"Look at the coward; I can't hold him up!"

"I'll help," said Miles in reply to a glance from Nat.

This was the opportunity if they were to have any. A great bearded Goliath of a fellow had snatched the rope.

"Now then—off he goes!" and he gave a tremendous pull.

The rope flew up over the beam! The noose had been cut with a sharp knife!

"Who did that?"

"I did!"

Miles was never before in such danger; he could not be in greater, and he knew it. But he was as calm as the day; and his senses worked as the most perfect machinery ought to do. A new knot was tying, but time is everything.

"Men," said Miles (as the crowd regarded him their astonishment rapidly changing to rage) "this man is no dearer to me than he is to that man of you all who hates him the most. But this is not right. I don't care for him—I do care for you. I am one of you and expect to share your fortunes and be your comrade and companion. I'm a little particular as to whom I sleep with."

He hazarded this rough pleasantry, and it was not without its effect. It was an odd and unexpected thing under the circumstances. It relieved the tension a little.

"I don't want to sleep with any man who was one of a hundred who murdered an unarmed man."

"Neither do I," said Nat. "And what's more I won't!"

"Why, you hit him," said a voice.

"I know I did, and I'm sorry for it. If I had supposed all you fellows were going to jump on him when I had him down, why, I wouldn't a-hit him."

"All ready again," shouted Goliath. "Let me up there and I'll make sure of him."

"There ain't room for any more," said Tom, nimbly jumping up by Miles' side.

"Then you get down."

"I won't do it. You fellows ought to be ashamed of yourselves. What kind of soldiers will you make—a hundred of you on one man——"

"Yes, and such a specimen of a poor, sneaking bloat as he is," said Nat skillfully, eying Lawyer Jordan with humorous contempt. The crowd laughed. "Look at him! Why, my Dick could lick him!" Another laugh and the men began to grow calmer.

"It is for your own sakes," pleaded Miles.

"You're another Secessionist, yourself," cried a voice in the outskirts of the crowd.

"Who says that?" demanded Miles, jumping down as the crowd made room for him. "Come here and say it to my face. My grandfather stood in Charleston once with a rope around his neck, like this poor cur here. They were going to hang him because he was an Abolitionist. I have it in my blood—and if the man who says I'm a Secessionist will come here I'll whip him within an inch of his life!"

Another diversion which had its effect.

The men composing this mob were not quickly swayed by light considerations; they were not of the sort to be influenced by trifles. But they had been heretofore law-abiding and had been taught to hold the public peace as of the highest importance; and they had a strong sense of fair play and the sanctity of personal rights. It was not a light consideration that brought them back to their senses. The tricks that were played by Nat and Miles and Tom were not intended to deceive. On the contrary they were meant only to give the time in which the maddened rioters might recover themselves. Even so light a thing as a child's hand upon the rein will guide the well-trained steed, though he flee with the wind. The power of habit will assert itself and is stronger than passion—and it was the habit of these men to regard bloodshed with an infinite aversion.

It was also a habit with them to avoid anything savoring of unnecessary or superogatory acknowledgment of error. They did not care to go further than to abandon the error. That was enough. So they begun to turn away from Lawyer Jordan with an air of indifference,

and an expression of countenance innocent of any sort of violent intention.

"This hanging's postponed till we git something that's got sand enough in it to stand up to be hung!" said Nat as he let the lawyer drop in a limp heap on the block.

"That's so! That's so!" and the crowd laughed good-humoredly.

"We've got to march at 8 o'clock to-night," continued Nat, "and we've got no captain. We must elect one."

"You be our captain, Nat."

"No—I'm not the man. You want a better man than me."

"We haven't got a better one."

"Yes, we have, and here he is. I nominate Miles Bancroft for captain of the Clayton Volunteers. He may put perfumery on his handkerchief, but he's got a wheelbarrow load of sand into him!"

"Second the motion," cried half a dozen voices.

"You that's in favor of Miles Bancroft say ay! Opposed, no! Carried unanimously!"

"Why, men, I—" began Miles.

"That's all right," said Nat. "Now, boys, three cheers for Captain Bancroft, and if we don't make him a colonel I'll eat him! Now then, all ready—one—two—three!"

And the cheers were given with such will that all Clayton heard them; and Margaret Henderson hearing them knew that her two knights had won their first fight.

CHAPTER VII.

"BONYPARTE A-CROSSIN' THE ALPS."

"Now then, boys," said the tall, old white-haired, rosy-cheeked fifer to his companions composing the hastily improvised band of the Clayton Volunteers; "now then, to begin with, we'll give 'em '*Bonyparte a-crossin' the Alps.*' That'll fetch 'em here quicker 'n anything else!"

And the inspiring old tune was played with a will that made up for the lack of artistic excellence, if there was any such lack, in the execution. I am inclined to believe, however, that there was nothing lacking. Perhaps Piccolo in the orchestra at the opera might have played it with more smoothness and the addition of fancy trills and quavers and flourishes, and he might have shaken a jeweled finger over the vents in his instrument with great effect upon the eye. I don't mean to say that he would not have done better, perhaps, looking at the performance from the point of view of the mere musical director. Perhaps he would. But I do mean to say that for the purposes of the occasion no maccaroni-eating, garlic-scented high-salaried son of Italy could have begun to do the work as old Fielding did it.

The spirit was there; and the thrill of the song as it rose and fell did not come from the old man's breath, which was only wind, but from his soul which was immortal and soaring with the inspiration of a cause which the hard-headed old Abolitionist believed was the grandest God ever gave for man to fight and die in. The old man thought he knew what he was doing—knew what he was saying to the world with that little black fife of his. He knew that he summoned, not mere men to a bloody, ruffianly riot, but grand, strong, shining souls to go forth despising all ease, despising all danger, with contempt

for all pain and suffering and sacrifice and death, to do God's work by God's appointment and bearing God's commission in their hands.

He almost imagined that the poor slave, hundreds of miles away, fainting beneath the lash in the humid air of his prison-pen, might hear the strain and that it might be to him as a draught of pure air from the mountain top, to invigorate and encourage him to strike a blow for himself and his race. And as his imagination took him this flight the strain soared with a buoyant curve of joyous elation that made men's blood tingle in their veins.

But when he dreamed that he was sending a shrill warning to the oppressor and the tyrant he put such a stress of stern meaning, such a threat of awful vengeance—God's long-delayed but terrible reprisal—into the song, that men hearing it grew suddenly grave and awed with shudderings.

And as his mental vision swept forward over the scenes of carnage that must be before the wrong could be made right and before the keen sword of the Almighty should cease its flashings among wicked men; when he heard with prophetic ear the wail of strong men distorted in agony on bloody fields and saw with sharpened sight the strewn corpses of a nation's gallant youth; when he conned the trials through which all would have to pass before the end was reached he sent into his music all the strength of a soul seasoned to endurance and nerved to unyielding determination.

When he saw the piteous eyes of wives and maidens as they silently flocked about him and drank in the awful significance of the message he brought, his heart almost softened and his breath was fain to attune itself to milder strains; but when he looked again and saw back of this piteous pleading the strong souls of these heroines and that they would not have him hesitate even though their hearts were bleeding, then he triumphed with them, and sang the song of their victory in a nobler note!

No one knew better than he that for the moment the burden of the day rested upon him chiefly. The hour that was to try not only the souls of men but of women, also, had come. Nothing that had gone before and

nothing that could follow could equal the strain that this hour brought upon the manhood and womanhood of Clayton. For it was the hour set for the assembling of the volunteers to take up the line of march from their peaceful homes to meet the swiftly-coming chances of war. And while he knew his neighbors well enough to know that trying as the ordeal might be they would triumph over it, that they were men who were not accustomed to the idle and thoughtless assumption of responsibilities and were therefore not of those to be frightened from an undertaking of which they had counted the cost, still he knew that with the inspiration he could furnish new courage would come to lift up their hearts.

Can we ever forget the old man as he stood there that day, tall and thin, with the snows of years upon the sparse locks that straggled down to his shoulders, the roses of hale old age on his clean-shaven cheeks and the fire of heroism in his steel-blue eyes, his hat off and his head thrown forward, his foot keeping time with the music as he played? He may have been an uncouth old man of rude speech and manners, but his soul was clean and his heart was the heart of a Round-Table Knight. It beat with a man's love for his race with a saint's pity for their sufferings and a warrior's daring in their cause. And there was no rudeness in the song with which he summoned his comrades to their task. Its grammar was perfect and its eloquence divine.

Of course not all of his comrades had come to the point where they looked at things as he did. The late followers of Lawyer Jordan were not all of them as yet, by any means, "Abolitionists." They were simply "Union men." They were to grow a great deal before they caught up with old Fielding. There were, in truth, not many besides Nat and Miles who were in entire harmony with the old fifer. Tom was not, certainly. He had given the matter but little attention. So far, he was rejoiced chiefly at an opportunity to get away from uncongenial surroundings and to enter upon a life whose romantic promise was inexpressibly attractive to him. He was to reach manhood by a short cut. And he was to have an opportunity to win a name and a fame that would wipe

out the few years that stood between him and Margaret Henderson. He didn't stop to inquire what he would do when this desirable result was accomplished, nor to speculate upon the matter further than to decide that when he had won a man's laurels he would no longer be a boy and that neither he nor Margaret would ever stop to think again about his age.

But Tom, with the few other thoughtless ones, and Lawyer Jordan's late followers, were all to come to old Fielding's way of thinking and take their places with Nat and Miles, before they were through with the work they had so suddenly entered upon; and old Fielding knew it, by instinct, and hailed as brothers to-day men whom yesterday he detested as aliens from the saving knowledge of God's righteousness.

And so they gathered, in the dropping twilight of the early evening, Tom and Nat and Miles, and we know what *they* were leaving; and Aleck Anderson, casting behind him his reckless, half-vagabond life with others, his companions; and Jim Druett from his law studies; and Sam Jamieson from his case in the *Eagle* office and his old, praying mother who gave him her blessing and was glad and proud of him while her heart was breaking with gloomy fears; and John Everett from his new farm, half-paid for, and his big family of little children; and Will Walters, the dapper little clerk from the dry-goods store; and John Wesley Hammond, the young Methodist parson elbow to elbow with Andrew McQuirk, the middle-aged Scotchman who had preached the terrors of Calvinism and had made the Presbyterian meeting-house fairly reel with the thunders of his denunciations of the accursed institution of human slavery for these twenty years; and Ed Hobson, the big rawboned country school-teacher who had come to town by accident just in time to enlist, which he did with a sigh of relief to think that he would not have to enter the hated schoolhouse again, for awhile at least; and Albert Olmstead, who left his widowed mother in paroxysms of grief which she would not try to stay; and John Hendley, who resigned hastily from the Common Pleas bench and sought to participate in an arbitrament sterner than any to which he had been

accustomed, but for which his soul had been longing, and which had come at last; and Harry Hunter, just graduated from Gambier; and young Dr. Woods, and Charley Hall, the shoemaker, and Robert Snead, the carpenter; and Dick Drummond, the loafer—why prolong the list? With the flower of the town the weeds were bound up—and we shall see some of them disappear in the stern shifting of war's selection and others springing up to magnificent manhood—from every rank in life in Clayton, and from all parties, creeds, churches, sects and religions, the well, and the sick, the strong and the weak, the good and the bad. Nearly all of them very quiet and grave, but some of them, of course, half-drunk and noisy.

They carried wardrobes, in some cases knotted up in handkerchiefs swung on sticks over their shoulders; but for the most part in sacks made of cotton cloth glazed to imitate leather. Provisions enough were brought to supply them for a week, and as they realized that they could not burden themselves thus uselessly they gave pain to wives and mothers and sweethearts who had toiled to prepare them dainties.

Fortunately Miles had picked up enough knowledge of military drill from the Massachusetts militia to be able after a half-hour's work to teach his men how to form company, face to the right in ranks of four and come to a front again—and he deepened thereby the admiration that had been growing in the town since the events of the afternoon at the market-house.

Nearly the entire population had turned out to see the volunteers off, and the boys had gathered boxes and barrels with which they made a huge bonfire to give light. Its flickering shone on the brass ball surmounting the spire which grew out of the cupola of the courthouse behind them, and lighted up the faces of the women thronged on the steps of the shops across the street in front of them. Among these latter Tom and Miles recognized the pale, beautiful face of the woman they both loved, and Nat dared not to look, for he knew that somewhere there, shaded from the brightest glare, Susie was watching, with Dick in her arms. He had bidden her good-by in a half-hour's talk in the little sitting room,

when they and the children before God were as to their souls and hearts naked and not ashamed, revealing their secret thoughts as they had never dreamed of doing. Tenderness might be permitted there, but nothing but stoicism could be allowed on the street.

"My friends," cried one, when at last everything seemed to be ready for the departure, "you are about to start out to the war——"

"Yes, and we don't want any flapdoodle about it, either," replied Nat with great promptness, cutting down thus remorselessly the professional orator of the village, who had thought to send the Clayton heroes proudly off to the war with a fine speech. "I'm not in command," continued Nat, "but it seems to me that if Father Goodman will just say a little prayer for us we'll be all ready to march."

With bowed and reverent heads the crowd heard the good old man commend the volunteers to the protection of the God in whose cause they were going forth; and Miles, lifting his hat in silent farewell to Margaret, gave the command "Right face, file left, march!" Old Fielding struck up "Barbara Allen," the crowd parted and the volunteers took their way steadily out the street leading east, toward Bryan's. As they passed the people closed in behind them and followed quietly till they reached the town limits, where they gave three cheers, to which the volunteers responded as they went on alone. As they came to the turn in the road and the lights of the village disappeared, Old Fielding drew a long breath and sent back the strains of "The Girl I left Behind Me" by way of a farewell.

Oh, the pain in torn hearts as the cords that bound them to those they loved stretched out till it seemed that death would snap them! And, oh, the strength of those cords that will stretch till they go round the world and will never yield till death shall sever them!

How these cords drew little Susie till she found at last that she had walked miles after her dear husband, with poor Dick asleep in her tired arms, and returned home to Aunt Nan, and Rosy awake and hungry and cross, long after midnight! How they held that stately girl, the

judge's daughter, at the edge of the village till the last mocking sound of old Fielding's life had died away and her father had silently led her home, where, seeking her room she had fallen upon her bed in a flood of tears!

And then began a weary round of days which counted up to weeks and weeks which grew to be months, when to those at home the cross was insupportable, and yet it was borne. Infrequent mails brought occasional letters from the loved ones in the field upon which mothers wives and sweethearts, living dazed lives, fed and drew such comfort of life as might be.

PART II.

RAW MATERIALS.

CHAPTER VII.

"I DON'T CARE IF THERE'S A MILLION!"

"THERE'S a whole regiment of Johnnies just beyond the cut, and they're dismounting and surrounding us! What shall we do?" asked the frightened soldier of his commander.

"We'll do what we were sent here to do," quietly replied the first corporal of Company "A" of the Second Regiment of Infantry. He was the commander.

"Well, but for God's sake! There's only eleven of us, and there's a thousand of them."

"I don't care if there's a million."

From the indolent tone and drawl you would have supposed that this first corporal was discussing a question in which he took but a slight and very languid interest.

"But they'll eat us up!"

"Do you think so?"

"Why, we can't hold out a minute!"

"Well, we won't knock under till the minute is up."

"Do you mean to say that you're going to fight?"

"Yes."

"Against such tremendous odds?"

"I don't find it in the books, so far, that we're expected to fight only when the enemy's force is smaller than ours."

"But do you find it in the books that eleven men have got to fight a thousand?"

"Yes, when it's necessary."

"Why, you're crazy! Nobody would blame you for surrendering to such an overwhelming force."

"I don't intend to give them the chance to blame me."

"I tell you again that there's a thousand of them."

"I tell you again that I don't care if there is a million of them."

Who but Tom had such a way of saying that he didn't "care" when he didn't? Who else had such a supple, swinging way of going ahead when once he had made up his mind; such a lithe, withy disregard of consequences? Yes, it was Tom. He continued: "But we've had enough talk. We were sent here to guard that bridge and my orders don't say that we are to run away from it the minute the enemy comes in sight. That's no way to guard it. It strikes me that's just the time to stick. We're not 'Home Guards.' If I understand this war business we are expected to fight occasionally. I enlisted with that understanding. Now, if the Johnnies get that bridge they will burn it and our troops can't get down to Manassas Junction. That's why they want to burn the bridge. It is our business to keep them from doing it, and that's what we'll do so long as we can. Get to your places and don't fire till I tell you to."

A pretty long speech for Corporal Tom.

"But we can escape now—the Johnnies haven't got around to the east of us—they're all down there in the cut. We can get away!"

"Not till we get orders. There ought to be a train-load of soldiers along here pretty soon and they will drive the cavalry off. Meantime we'll keep them from burning the bridge—if we can."

"Well, you can stay here if you want to. I'm going back to the regiment."

"Bar the door, Aleck. I'll shoot the first man who tries to desert!"

"You won't shoot me——"

"If you try to desert I will."

"You're——"

"That'll do—get to your places—Dick, I think I see a movement in the bushes just beyond the bridge—yes

—there he comes—wait till he passes the tree on the right and then let him have it!”

“He don’t seem to be in no hurry, neither,” said Dick.

“No. He’s looking about to see where we are. He will find out in a minute or two.”

“Why don’t he stand up like a man?”

“Like a fool, you mean. He doesn’t want to expose himself.”

“I’ve got all the soldiering I want,” said the man who had brought in the announcement of the arrival of the enemy. “I’m mighty glad my three months is up.”

“So am I,” replied Tom.

“We won’t enlist again, will we, Tom?”

“Not in the same company nor regiment if I find out which one you’re going to join.”

While he talked Tom’s eyes were fastened upon the advancing enemy.

“There he comes,” cried Dick.

“Well, keep cool about it. Don’t aim higher than his chest.”

The report of the musket had scarcely sounded when the Johnnie jumped into the air—a sure indication of a mortal wound—then fell in a convulsive heap on the ground.

Instantly, with a shout of rage and defiance, half a dozen of the stricken man’s companions rushed from their concealment in the bushes.

“Now then—all together—don’t waste any shots! Load and fire as rapidly as you can!”

The men in the stockade poured in a volley, and two more Johnnies fell. Dick had reloaded by this time and his second shot fetched a fourth. The remaining three fled.

This happened on a Sunday, just seven days before the first battle of Bull Run. The regiment to which the Clayton Volunteers had been assigned as Company “A,” had spent two out of the three months for which they were enlisted in and about Washington, drilling, helping to build forts, etc. In the latter part of June they were sent to the Virginia side of the Potomac, and about two weeks before the occurrence of which we have seen

the beginning Tom had been sent with a party of ten under command of Sergeant Kellogg—Nat—to guard the bridge upon which the railway crossed a small stream.

The lay of the ground was such that it was hard to get accommodations for his men; which led Nat to construct what was perhaps the first bridge stockade built during the war. The railroad wound around a steep hill facing south. The bridge was at the west end of the hill, which, almost up to the stream, had been dug down to make a roadbed. South of the road lay an immense ravine, receding sharply from the embankment which was stayed by a rude stone wall. On the west side of the stream the road trended southward through a deep cut, and it was in this cut that the enemy had been discovered by the guard as he lazily lounged across the structure.

Nat did not flatter himself that he was born for a soldier nor anything else in particular but a pretty good blacksmith, but he soon realized that if he got a comfortable place for quarters he would have to dig it out of the side of the hill. He found a spot within fifty yards of the bridge, where a huge shelf of rock projected about eight feet above the level of the roadway, and here he dug out a sort of a cave large enough to accommodate his men. The stone above formed a good roof, and the thing was comfortable enough except in the afternoon, when the hot sun gave them great annoyance. After enduring it for a day or two Nat finally concluded to put a front to his cave. A wrecked freight car lying half a mile off furnished the lumber, which he utilized by driving posts into the ground, two together but just far enough apart to admit his boards edgewise. He had no nails, nothing but a hatchet and an ax.

When he had put up the "face" of his cave his men made a roof of green boughs, which hung over and soon became withered and browned by the sun. The boards were already painted a reddish brown, and similar in color to the clay of the hillside, so that one might pass very near to the place without observing the habitation. From the bridge a stranger would be pretty sure not to see it. A door had been wrenched from the car and placed inside the hut, or stockade, or cave—the reader may call it whatever he chooses.

This was very comfortable and was much enjoyed for a day or two. The duty of guarding the bridge was performed in a most perfunctory way, and as there was no drilling nor fatigue duty to do the boys congratulated themselves on their good luck.

You smile, you grizzled old warrior, at such soldiering as this! But you must remember that this was very early in the war, when our volunteers were picnicking, so to speak. They learned very rapidly during the next year or two. Up to this time, however, experience in earnest war had taught them very little. For one thing, for example, they had an exceedingly strong notion that they would crush the rebellion in the very first battle they got into; and their notion of how they should fight that battle was just as crude as you could expect from an army of lawyers and judges and doctors and preachers and painters and farmers and carpenters and shoemakers and blacksmiths, who had never smelled powder.

One day, however, an idea seemed to strike Sergeant Kellogg. He and Corporal Bailey had climbed the hill west of the stream and were lying in the shade of a tree, looking idly down at the bridge.

"I've just been thinking, Tom——"

"Don't do it! You're getting no pay for it. You're paid only for fighting—and for the amount you've done I'm of the opinion that you've been overpaid."

"There, there; listen to me! That's what I've been thinking about. Now, what were we sent here for?"

Tom looked at him with an expression of indolent inquiry.

"That's the question," added Nat.

"Why, to guard the bridge, I reckon—I haven't seen your orders."

"That's what they say."

"Well?"

"Well, it's just struck me that we would guard this bridge like the old woman kept tavern in Indiana if any Johnnies should attack it."

Tom grew interested—just a little bit.

"Do you expect them to attack it?"

"Well, I should scarcely think they'd put us here if they didn't think that they might attack it."

"That's so."

"I've been thinking that if the Johnnies should come in any force we wouldn't be more'n a half a bite for 'em!"

"That would depend on how long we would last."

"Exactly. And how long would we last if we had to stand out there—for we've got to defend the bridge—and let the Johnnies stay up here in the bushes and shoot at us?"

"We could flank them—that's military."

"Yes, and raise thunder! While we were gallivantin' around, flankin' and cuttin' all them military frills, they'd burn the bridge!"

"That's so! Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"That's what I've been thinking about."

A brief pause followed, during which Tom chewed the stems of the long timothy grass and Nat was buried in profound thought, his brows knitted and his eyes fixed on the scene below.

"Tom, what would you call that thing down there?"

"What thing?" asked Tom, rising quickly on his elbow.

"Why the thing we live in."

"Oh," said Tom, falling back into the grass with an air of relief. "Why, that's a—a—why that's a shebang!"

"Very well. Now we've got to fix up the shebang so that we can fight in it."

"How?"

"Cut some holes in her and fix up the door so we can shut her up."

"Sergeant Kellogg, you're a smart man—almost smart enough to be a second lieutenant. If you keep on I'll recommend you for promotion!"

"Come on," answered Nat, "we've no time to lose."

"Why? Do you see any Johnnies coming?"

"No, nor I don't want to till I get the shebang fixed up so's we can entertain them when they call."

The detail had to work like beavers for the next twenty-four hours, but at last, with the thickness of the board front doubled, holes cut for muskets and the door arranged so that it could be closed and barred, the she-

bang had been converted into a pretty good sort of a stockade. An opening at the east side, furthest from the bridge, gave ample light.

He had scarcely got his defenses completed when Nat was ordered back to the regiment, ten miles in the rear, and Tom was left in command. So long as Nat was present Tom was very careless and took life easy like a major with the colonel and lieutenant-colonel present for duty.

So soon, however, as the responsibility of the post devolved on him he became watchful and alert. The attack found him ready. He knew that if there really was a regiment of Johnnies it would be a question of time only, and that unless a train happened along he would be overpowered sooner or later. But he meant to fight as long as he could. That was about the clearest impression he had in the premises.

His effort at repelling the advance on the bridge had been so successful and bloody for a small affair that the enemy rested in concealment for some little time. They had met with so warm a reception that they had concluded to consult over the matter before making a second essay. It behooved them to think. They had expected to meet nothing more formidable than a corporal's guard. The vigor of their repulse was as if it came from a regiment. Tom watched from his shebang with great anxiety for their reappearance and thanked God for every moment's delay; feeling that it brought his train with succor that much nearer.

At last a bugle-call was heard from near the enemy's position and three men—an officer, a soldier bearing a handkerchief on a staff, and a bugler cautiously emerged from the cut at the west end of the bridge. They were without arms.

"A flag of truce," said Tom. "They want to talk it over."

"Don't you go out there—they might hurt you."

"Oh, no, they won't—not under a flag of truce. Aleck, I leave you in command. Keep a sharp eye on them, and if they do try to play me any games do what you can to help me."

"All right—but be careful!"

"I will," answered Tom, as he stepped out and slipped down the steep hill to the bridge. The bearers of the flag advanced to meet him, halting midway of the bridge.

"I have come from Colonel Harding to demand the surrender of your garrison, sir. I am a captain, sir, and it is scarcely a fair return of our courtesy that your commanding officer sends out a corporal to meet me."

"You are mistaken, sir," said Tom, with dignity and yet a gentle air of humor, "we ought to complain if any complaint is to be made, since the commanding officer of our forces comes in person to meet you."

"Do you mean that you are in command?"

"I do."

"Well, sir, I have but few words to say, sir. I summon you to surrender at once."

"And I have fewer to answer. We won't do it."

"Won't surrender?"

"Not any."

"This is no time for braggadocio."

"I've no intention of bragging."

"Why, sir, we have a thousand men here."

"So I have been told."

"You can't hold out against us."

"I'll try it."

"Why, we can eat you up."

"Yes?"

"It will be hopeless to attempt to resist."

"Still, I will attempt it. I have some pretty good men under my command, and I assure you you won't get this bridge without fighting for it."

"We must have the bridge, and we will!"

"Not without paying for it."

"I warn you that if you persist in your foolish resistance you will be given no mercy—if you surrender now we will parole you and let you go home—if you resist we will show you no quarter."

"I don't ask any, sir. It is useless to waste words. I was ordered to defend this bridge and I'll do it so long as I have a round of ammunition and a man to handle a musket. I don't know much about soldiering, but I know that much!"

"You are a brave man—or boy—and I'm sorry for you."

"Don't mention it, I beg! Have you anything more to say?"

"Nothing."

"Then we may as well return to our friends, I reckon."

"Are there many such men as you in your army?"

"I hope we have but few who are not better men."

"It is an honor to fight such men!"

"We will try to be worthy of your good opinion."

"Good-by, sir."

"Good-by."

And shaking hands cordially they separated, each returning to his command.

"Now then, boys," said Tom, "the fighting begins in earnest! Take care that every shot counts and don't give up till I say the word!"

The men took their places, drawing coolness from their leader, till you would have thought them veterans.

"What did they want?" asked Dick.

"They wanted us to surrender."

"Surrender? Before we'd had a fight?" asked Aleck incredulously.

"Precisely."

"Well, that was mighty cheeky!"

"You was an infernal fool not to do it," whined Hilman, the coward who had first given notice of the presence of the enemy.

"If I hear another word out of you I'll put you outside to draw their fire!" said Tom fiercely. "Get back there out of the way and keep still!"

"Here they come!" shouted Dick.

This time they came to the number of a score and without paying any heed to Tom and his men they devoted all their energies to an attempt to fire the bridge.

The little band in the shebang opened fire with great coolness and deadly effect. Still the Johnnies stuck to their work, a new man stepping forward to take the place of every one that was stricken. In a very few minutes smoke began to ascend from the west end of the bridge.

"They've got her started!" shouted Dick. "Hadn't we better go out and charge them?"

"No—then they will have us. They are too many for us, man to man, with cold steel. This is the best place to do effective work."

Tom had scarcely ceased speaking when a ragged roar, like the rending of a mighty sail, was heard and simultaneously a shower of balls pattered on the hillside and all around, above and below them.

"They are up on the hill!" screamed one of the men, suddenly growing frantic with excitement.

"I don't care if they are," said Tom. "Keep cool, nobody's hurt yet! Fire on the fellows at the bridge—leave the fellows on the hill alone. Now then—give it to 'em!"

The Johnnies had climbed the hill south of the cut and were firing like demons.

"I'm afraid the bridge is gone," said Tom.

"See them crossing the bridge!"

Sure enough! A hundred of them at least were hurrying over the bridge, with the evident purpose of storming the shebang.

"Give it to 'em!" yelled Tom. "They shan't *all* get here, anyhow!"

He realized that the supreme moment had come at last, as did his men, and they nerved themselves to die like men. The Johnnies came swarming up the hill yelling like devils, when just as they were at the threshold of the shebang the scream of a bugle mingled with the shriek of a locomotive was heard and as their comrades disappeared from the hilltop beyond, those in Tom's front tumbled to the track and sought refuge as best they might. But some were crushed by the engine, while others were shot down by the soldiers on the train as it rushed over the bridge and stopped in the cut whence came the confused roar of instant, bitter carnage.

"The buckets!" cried Tom so soon as his front was cleared; and with his men in a few moments he had water from the stream upon the burning timbers. So soon as he had extinguished the flames he returned to the shebang.

The first sight that met his eyes was the dead body of Hilman. The poor wretch in seeking safety had found danger in the back part of the cave, where a glancing shot had given him his death—the only loss to Corporal Tom's command.

In another moment Nat and Miles were at his side. It was his own regiment on the train, *en route* to Manassas Junction; and they took him and his men along with them, leaving to others the duty of guarding the bridge.

It was the first time that any of the regiment had been under fire. And if Tom's eyes glowed with gratification when he was complimented on all hands, and by the general commanding the division in a published order in which his exploit was set forth, who shall blame him? Or Miles for sending home to Margaret Henderson a copy of a Washington paper containing an elaborate if highly colored account of the affair? Was it not a generous and manly thing?

For Miles had guessed that the woman he loved was equally dear to his first corporal.

CHAPTER VIII.

A STRANGE THING HAPPENS IN CLAYTON.

AND now a strange thing happened in Clayton.

Aunt Nan was coming home from a visit to a sick neighbor and she got the news from a small boy. Without pausing to think, she went with it at once to Susie. The little woman was sitting in a low rocking chair with Rosy at her fair, bountiful breast, and her eyes were filled with a far-away look; as well they might be, for she was looking at Nat, away off down South there, perhaps wounded and dying at this very moment. She sprang to her feet.

"Aunt Nan!"

It was almost a shriek, for the old woman's sallow face held the horror of an awful message.

"There's been a battle, honey, down in Virginia!"

"And Nat?"

"I don't know, honey, I didn't hear."

And as the poor, trembling little mother stood there holding her child to her breast where it drank life in its sleep, Aunt Nan gave her the news she got from the boy.

A great battle had been fought near Washington in Virginia. The rebels had an overwhelming force and they had whipped the Union army terribly. What few were not killed outright had thrown down their arms and fled, hunted by "Louisiana Tigers," "The Black Horse Cavalry," "The Texas Rangers," and other organizations with terror-breeding names, made up of wild, desperate men who were known to be attached to the rebel army at Manassas. Only a few of the Union soldiers had escaped with their lives.

This was the story, in brief, that Aunt Nan, having it from the boy, had repeated to poor little Susie. Before

she concluded it Susie sank down upon the haircloth sofa where she sat, her eyes growing hollower each second, as if she were dying. Then she handed the child without a word, to the old woman, rearranged her dress and put on her wide-brimmed straw hat. She was trembling and almost tottering.

"Where are you going?"

"Down to the judge's. Maybe—maybe—I don't know—but I'm going there——"

If Nat could only have been there to have stayed with his big, strong hands her trembling little fingers, which went wandering over her dress front and toyed with the strings to her hat and seemed to linger longest on the brooch which fastened her collar, and which contained his hair, although clearly the motion was involuntary and she was not thinking of that! If he could have ended that distress then and there and brought peace and comfort back to that loving heart he would have done enough for one man's lifetime!

But Nat wasn't there. He was very far away—heaven knew whether he was even living or not. Oh, the thousand pictures of her brave husband that sprang into her mind in that short minute!

Lying dead—stark, cold and bloody, with his dear face cloven by a blow from the saber of one of those dreadful, inhuman rebels; they had been barbarous with slaves all their lives and would think nothing of killing a man!

Groaning on the field, trampled by fierce horses, suffering agonizing pains, with cold and deathly sweat on his brow, and no one near to do him the simplest act of God's charity!

A prisoner, in the hands of the brutal enemy, who, it might be, would torture him as the Indians used to torture their captives!

Helpless in a hospital, his ears filled with the cries and groans of the wounded under the hands of the surgeons, shrieking as the keen knives cut into them or the bloody saws gnawed their bones!

Pursued by infuriated human bloodhounds and flying—but, no! Nat would never form a part of any such picture as that!

And the thought heartened her up a bit.

"Aunt Nan, he may be dead, or he may be wounded or a prisoner, but Nat would never throw down his gun and run away!"

"No, indeed, he wouldn't, honey! Maybe it would be better for him if he would! But he won't never turn his back to no man, even if he was the biggest rebel in all South Car'liny!"

The men of the North may have doubted it at times, but the women and children knew that without question the rebels in South Carolina were only approached in natural ferocity akin to that of a wild beast by those of Louisiana and Texas. They had terrible attributes and would probably think little of eating human flesh, even if the notion should strike them that by so doing they would add a pang to the fears or sufferings of their enemies.

"I'm going to the judge's," repeated Susie, somewhat vacantly.

"Go along, an' don't worry. I'll take care of the children."

Oh, yes, the children! She felt a little hand grasp her skirts to stay the unsteady swaying of a little figure and looking down Susie gave a cry of joy, for there were Nat's dear eyes smiling up at her! It is true they were in little Dick's curly head, but they were Nat's eyes, and they brought her Nat's message all the same. And she stooped and strained the little fellow to her heart and drew wonderful strength and comfort from him. Then she rose quickly and went swiftly toward the judge's house.

It was in the air!

Five minutes had not elapsed since Aunt Nan and the small boy had held their solitary converse in the deserted street, and now the footways were filled with silent, flitting figures. It was not necessary for Susie to wonder whether they had heard the news. Although none of them spoke with their tongues they cried aloud their intense feeling in the gait with which they walked. And as she passed along men drew back quietly and respectfully, as they would at a funeral, to give her room.

"Poor Nat! Dead, maybe by this time. He was a good fellow, if he was a little rough!" And they fell to summing up his virtues, according to the blessed way of the world, in subdued tones.

Margaret Henderson was sitting at the low window from which you might step on the lawn if it were not for the wild brier rosebush that would prick you. The maiden was idly dreaming with the *Ladies' Repository* in her lap. The judge was taking a comfortable after-dinner nap on the roomy lounge in the wide hall, twenty feet away. The house was quiet and perfect repose and silence reigned, save for the loud ticking of the tall old clock on the landing at the head of the stairs. What was Margaret thinking about?

Do you need to ask when you see her rise so quickly, as Susie clicked the latch of the gate, and pass so swiftly and noiselessly out to meet her? You are dull eyed, too, if you cannot see that she has grown paler.

"Oh, Margaret, there's been a dreadful battle, and of course the regiment must have been in it, for it was in Virginia, right where they were when Nat wrote me last——"

You are filling your soft, white palms with thorns, my child, and the blood from your wounds is staining the rose leaves!

"And is—is—have you heard——"

"Oh, Margaret, Margaret, I don't know whether Nat is dead or alive! But I do know that he didn't run like they say they all did!"

Ah! Margaret remembers now. She rallies her senses. She had nearly betrayed herself, but now she is calm.

"Of course he didn't! Who would dare say such a thing of Nat? Come, Susie," and she drew her to the bench under the apple tree whose sweeping boughs hid them from the street, and heard the terrible story in full.

Whose face is it that Margaret sees, pale and cold and trampled with cruel hoofprints into the bruised grass and dull clay? Whose groan of agony falls upon her ear? Whose bright blood wells from an awful gaping wound? Who is it, with high courage and will, and strength is daring Death as he faces the wicked foe and stems the

wild, shameful retreat? Whose face is this, handsome and godlike, that is ever before the maiden's eyes as she hears the story Susie is telling with a tongue so dry that it will scarcely perform its functions? Is it yours, Miles Bancroft?

Or my poor, poor Tom; my bright, chivalric, brave boy, is it yours? Do you thank God in the unreasoning and all daring hopefulness of generous youth that you don't know? You ought to!

What has become of all this stoicism that Clayton has taught her children and of which they have been so proud? What shameful weakness! Would anything less than the rude shocks of war batter it down as the guns yonder batter down the strong walls of the fort? If nothing less would do it let us thank Heaven that at least there is this good gotten out of this calamity.

Susie has fallen into Margaret's arms and together they are weeping bitterly. They will feel all the better for it presently.

And it did them good, and when it had spent its force and they were calmer they rose up and went toward the house to wake the old man, who was sleeping uneasily there under his red bandanna handkerchief; but as they drew near the door the clang of the bell broke the silence. They stopped and looked at each other as if the mere sound brought the confirmation of their fears. The slow, dull peal was full of meaning; a very different meaning than it had when Nat's strong thews were ringing Clayton patriotism to arms. This time it was tolled slowly and solemnly and mournfully.

"What is the bell ringing for, Margaret? And why do they ring it so slowly?"

The judge had been asleep, bear in mind, and who knows what he had been dreaming of?

"There is dreadful news, father. Susie has just told me of it. There has been an awful battle fought down in Virginia before Washington, and the Union forces have been whipped and what few of them were not killed or captured threw down their arms and fled in a shameful panic."

The judge rose from his couch and listened to the story amazed, breathless and almost stunned. The Union army whipped, throwing down its arms and flying panic stricken? What, in God's name, did it mean? Was it true then that the South had rated the manhood of the North properly? What was to become of the country? Was God asleep and would He permit such a calamity as the triumph of the South would be? He had never dreamed of such a thing!

Would it be possible for the North to rally from such a shock?

Possible! It *must* rally! This awful reverse must not be permitted to be conclusive if even he himself had to shoulder a musket and oppose the dried marrow of his old bones to the insolence of these unholy victors? What was this vision of long years of bloodshed and devastation that rose up before him? He had thought the struggle would be but a brief one, but now—he glanced at the two women gazing at him with childlike appeal in their dewy eyes. He saw the pain in Susie's face, and with a father's compassion he said, as if involuntarily:

"My poor child! My heart bleeds for you!"

The blood rushed to Margaret's face. He knew her secret, she thought, and although he had never before said a word to her, his quick, warm heart could not resist the anxiety he must know consumed her!

"You are grieving for your husband and fearing all evil for him," and he took Susie's hand with such fatherly tenderness as brought the tears afresh to her eyes. "But keep up your courage! It may be all right with him. We cannot tell. We will soon know," and he hands her to a seat with gentle kindness, repeating almost incoherently his reassurances.

And Margaret? How suddenly and cruelly was she undeceived. The color fled almost as quickly as it had come. And then she felt a cold sickness at her heart as she walked to the window and looked out into the July sunlight and felt that even if the worst should come she was shut out from all sympathy. Others could have friendly hands to hold them up and help them to bear their heavy burdens, but she must go alone and not even

have the privilege of claiming an equal interest in the fortunes of the time. And there was no help for it. Very well. She would not repine. Indeed she could not.

"Come, let us go," said the old man after a few moments' thought, and without further words the three took their way to the courthouse, toward which all the people in the village were bending their steps as the solemn bell still called them.

There was no written law for this. The village council had never passed an ordinance providing that in time of war the people should, at the ringing of the bell, assemble at the courthouse to take counsel together. But since the April day when Nat had assumed the leadership it was as well understood as if it had been proclaimed with all the impressiveness of a law duly enacted and published.

And as the people entered the building they silently filed into the seats and benches and sat with a solemn stillness that was broken now and then only by the suppressed sobbing of a woman grieving over her fears, or the short, dry cough of a man, as if he had arrived at that point in his thoughts when it became necessary for him to stop and collect himself that he might go on with the subject decently and in order.

Outside, the sun began to decline slowly toward the west, and the birds waking from their heat-of-the-day nap began to flit about and fill the air with songs, while a light breeze came quietly rustling the leaves of the locusts and elms which, filled with glancing light, stood by the open windows.

At last the bell ceased its doleful tolling and an added hush fell upon the people, like that in church at a funeral. No one thought of asking himself what was to be done now that all were gathered together. They were there together, where they could look into each other's faces and unite in supporting individual woes, if such woes as they faced could be called individual—were aught else than public calamities. The fear that Nat Kellogg or John Hendley had been killed in battle was no less their concern than it was that of Susie or Rebecca

Hendley, the young judge's wife. And the timid mother of that ne'er-do-well, Aleck Anderson, the unassuming old woman who had lost caste because her wild son had involved himself in petty neighborhood disgrace, was given place and consideration that afternoon as the woman who had brought a hero and a patriot into the world.

The preliminary clearing of his throat gave notice that Father Goodman was about to open the exercises of the meeting, whatever they might prove to be, and with one consent, unbidden, the throng rose and stood with bent heads. They were before their God, and to Him, stretching forth his hands over the stricken people, the parson brought their griefs.

"Before Thee stand all the nations and the people thereof, and their lives and their works are in Thy hands. We are but as sparrows, and yet Thou dost note the fall of the bird to the ground. We have striven with much weakness and feebleness but, oh, God, with no infirmity of purpose, to keep Thy laws and to live after Thy commandments. When we thought that Thou didst call us to go forth against the enemies of Thy truth, our young men and our strong men, our fathers, husbands, brothers and friends, hastened to obey the summons. Our hearts were torn at parting with them and our dreams have been filled with visions of evil come upon them. But we have never doubted that we heard Thy voice aright, and we have never swerved from our determination to do Thy will, even though we drink of the bitter waters and our streets are filled with the moans of those whose loved ones have perished in Thy cause. Thou doest all things well, and we come, oh, our Father, while our lips are white and almost dumb with the horror of the tidings that have reached us, and all the more awful because they are vague and not plain and open, while our hearts are wrung and torn with anguish we come to say again to Thee that Thou doest all things well, and that as Thy children we bow to Thy will, which our faith assures us is loving kind toward us, although Thy clouds are thick about us. If any of our loved ones have fallen in death they are beyond our prayers—our hope is that in the pious fervor and courage with which they went

forth to do Thy will even unto death, they wiped out from the book of Thy remembrance all evidences of their sins and shortcomings. And oh, most just God, if it be sin that we believe that this is so, be not angry with us—for we do believe it!”

Strive as he did, perhaps, the old man could not restrain an almost defiant ring to his voice and he fairly trembled as a fervent “Amen!” burst from the people. His tone grew more subdued, but his manner was no less earnest as he went on:

“If our dear ones are lying stricken with wounds, be with them, we beseech Thee. Give them patience under their afflictions and bring them again to speedy health, that they may live nobler lives in Thy service. And upon these gathered here together, and in this village, and throughout all this broad land who are sorrowing and whose hearts are bursting with grief and apprehension—upon them and upon us we pray that Thou wilt look in pity and with tender love. Lift up our hearts and heal us with glad tidings of the safety of our friends and loved ones if it be possible. But if it be otherwise give us strength to bear with Christian resignation whatever woe Thy love shall lay upon us.

“Sinners as we are, weak and erring, we claim our birthright; we are Thy children, and we will bless Thy holy name forever! All our trust is in Thee!”

There was a firmer beat to every heart when the old preacher had made an end of his prayer. He had led the people up and placed their feet upon the firm rock. They raised their heads with increased courage and calmness. After a moment's pause the judge rose and by force of habit, it may be, took his place at the bench. A glance at his face was a confirmation of the strength the preacher had given.

“My friends,” he began in his guarded way, “we have had to-day sad news. Sad, first, because it seems to threaten evil to our beloved country, and secondly, because it portends hurt and harm to those who have gone from among us to fight against a wicked and unholy attempt to destroy the republic. I confess that the first impression is one of dismay and humiliation. We had

counted on something different. Notwithstanding the boasts of the Secessionists, we felt here that the manhood of our own people would be more than equal to the test to which it would be put. Our news brings us deep chagrin. The Union army has been defeated; and report says that such of our soldiers as were not disabled fled in a panic, throwing away their arms with a shameless desire to rid themselves of all that would impede their flight. This is bitter news. All in all it is too early yet to understand its full significance, perhaps.

"It may excite a smile if I should say to you that this news has suddenly convinced me that the nation has entered upon a struggle that will last longer and be much more bloody and disastrous than I had anticipated. We may have ignorantly belittled our enemy. We have forgotten that the Southern people are, after all, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh—Americans. Then let us learn from this news that we must gird ourselves and prepare for a great war.

"I have no fear nor doubt as to the result. Our cause is God's cause. We cannot err as to that. And we *must* win. The manhood of those who went from our midst a few weeks ago has been built up among us, and we cannot doubt it. The recent disaster I know did not come about through the cowardice of our friends, and when we remember that the people of Clayton are like the people of the thousands of towns throughout the North and reflect that these towns sent their brave men as we sent ours to make up that army, how can we resist the conclusion that that army is an army of heroes and not of cowards; that by some mismanagement or error likely to happen and naturally to be expected from a people almost wholly unused to war our army was thrown into confusion, and thus the day was lost? No, no! The Clayton Volunteers are not cowards. The men in the Union army are not cowards, and the time and the place will serve before we are through with this war when they will demonstrate that they are not."

The suppressed fire that was burning within the old judge burst forth and kindled every hearer.

"We must win, if we all have to enlist! Get ready!

More soldiers will be needed! Put your houses in order, as I will mine, to go if the need comes. I'm an old man, but not too old to fight for my country and against the accursed institution of slavery!

"Let our women be strong. They are the superstructure upon which we build, after all. The influence of woman is the most potent in the world after that of God Himself; and it molds men. Let them not yield to the fears with regard to our friends in the army that have naturally come upon them. Our volunteers may not have suffered greatly, although I know they were in the fight if they could get there! If they have suffered our women must give us the example of heroic fortitude and endurance with which woman in all times has nerved the heart of man in the hour of need!"

It was Sunday, it is true, and the inhabitants of the village of Clayton were strongly religious, but they sent up such a cheer after the judge's speech, of which I have been able to give only the dry husks, as rent the heavens.

And the parson joined in.

And the people went to their homes strengthened and encouraged, and put their houses in order as the judge had advised; and upon the first opportunity Clayton sent more of her strong men to the army.

Now, is it not strange that while Clayton had heard the news of the battle of Bull Run, in all essentials true in outline as to that battle, it heard it precisely one week before it was fought, viz. : on Sunday, July 14, 1861, the very day that Corporal Tom made such a gallant defense of Bartlett's bridge? Where the report came from or how it originated no one knew, nor does any one know to this day.

And at the moment that Susie was drawing such comfort and strength from little Dick, as she strained him to her heart, Nat was wringing Tom's hand and congratulating him upon the brave fight he had made.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT THE VAGABOND WINDS HEARD.

EARLY in the evening the camp was a babel of all manner of sounds, which were caught on the evening winds and softly carried away, beyond the guards and the pickets, out into that vague, mysterious distance in the depths of which the enemy lay, grim and defiant. Beginning at the rear where the wagons were, with the neighing of horses, the song of the teamsters, the clank of chains and the rattle of wagons, it went along toward the white tents and bright fires where the soldiers were, gathering the clinking of pots and pans, the barking of an occasional dog, the hee-haw of a mule, the squeaking of a fiddle, the snorting blasts blown by a practicing bugler, the laughter of careless men seated in their tents or lying in the grass of the parade ground, telling stories, cracking jokes and amusing themselves as if they were on a frolic. There was the humming of men's voices to furnish the body to which the other sounds were a garnishment. Occasionally the dull thump of horses' hoofs, accompanied by the rattling of harness and a heavy rumbling gave notice that batteries of artillery were being shifted about from one part of the field to the other; and the whistling of locomotives, subdued and muffled by the distance which scarcely permitted the faintest echo of the roar of railway trains, testified that fresh troops and supplies were reaching the front. A ragged volley of cheers once in awhile came floating up from the rear to say that a new regiment, very much fatigued but full of enthusiasm, was on hand to share the fortunes of the morrow. The camp guards were kept busy to restrain the wandering propensities of the men, and the sharp "Halt! halt!" fell upon the ear with a flat

lack of resonance like the patter of heavy, detached rain drops upon the leaves that herald the coming of a sudden summer shower. The sutler's shops were thronged with laughing, talkative men in shabby, carelessly worn uniforms, who paid three prices for little luxuries wholly unnecessary, if not absolutely harmful, with the proverbial recklessness of soldiers. Bursts of laughter came from detached groups sitting apart in the darkness, and sometimes seriously talking heroes in groups of two or three might have been stumbled upon, grave and low voiced, trading messages for loved ones at home, steadily and manfully looking the morrow with all its chances in the eye.

At headquarters the tents were luminous, and seemed from a short distance like filmy creations of palpitating light held to the earth mysteriously by black lines which were of spider-web delicacy or broader and darker as they happened to be ropes or poles. A line of horses saddled and bridled stood in front of the long row of tents and active orderlies summoned by short, sharp calls were constantly darting into the glowing cones and out again and mounting steeds and plunging off into the darkness with haste and a free rein. And as they went they also momentarily came; dismounting with much jingling of spurs and clanking of sabers to present their receipts or replies; so that the number was never diminished. Within the tents anxious brains were puzzling over problems connected with the disposition of regiments and batteries and brigades and divisions and, alas, ambulances and hospital tents; and coming to conclusions which were rapidly being crystallized into words and given to waiting staff officers and clerks to be put into orders; and the pen scratched wearily the whole night through in behalf of the sword—the master serving the servant.

And there was one brain that knew no rest and one head that was filled with the anxiety of responsibility in the premises, where thousands of lives and who could tell? it might be the destinies of millions of people depended upon his wisdom and courage and skill! And of the thousands of men this one made the least noise!

And all at once, added to the other turmoil, came first the silvery tone of a solitary bugle and then the ringing blasts from hundreds, and then the tap, tap of the drums preceding the rattling thunder of tattoo. Before the reverberations had died out a new apparent confusion arose as thousands of men in company formation were, each for himself, answering "here!" to the loud monotonous calling of the roll. And now the noise was at its height.

And the evening wind still carried it out beyond the guards and the pickets till it reached the lowering front of that vague mystery behind which the enemy lay, and there it halted and temporized and faded away into the dewy darkness like a vapping bully who suddenly collapses when confronted by the foe he has been so noisily seeking.

Ah! there were secrets behind that vagueness whose mystery was enough to appal something stouter hearted and stronger limbed than a wandering babel of noise borne upon the vagabond winds of the stealthy, shadowy night!"

They came near to appalling Tom himself as he prowled noiselessly along the front of the foe, vainly trying to pierce the shades and discover something. He had no business there and went in pursuance of an idle inclination, which he could not have explained had he been summoned to do so. A friend in charge of a picket post had yielded to his importunities and, giving him the countersign, had allowed him to go beyond the lines.

For some time Tom saw nothing to reward him as he crept up and down in front of the enemy, but he was at least away from the annoyances of camp, and his thoughts were a curious jumble, in which Margaret Henderson and the enemy, whose position he was trying to scan, and the dread probabilities of the morrow, with an occasional recollection of how poor Hilman looked lying dead in the shebang; and Margaret again, and Miles Bancroft, with his distorted face and wild, passionate pleadings on that April afternoon, and the trend of the slope off to the right toward the row of low bushy trees along the country lane, beyond which was an expanse of dense, impene-

trable thicket, and a thousand other things were strangely intermingled. And he began to chide himself musingly that this was so, and that he was not improving his opportunities, which, he thought, showed that he lacked balance and would never amount to anything, when from the top of the slope came a sharp click like the sound made when a shovel strikes a pebble.

At once his senses were all alive, and while Margaret Henderson's face still remained with him and floated between him and his thoughts, as it always did, still his faculties had settled down to one task and that was indicated by the sound he had heard.

He dropped flat upon the sward and listened. By degrees he got his auricular bearings and could distinguish the sound of men digging. Their low tones came to him faintly at times, but he was not able to catch their words. As his eye grew accustomed to the sky line he perceived what seemed to be a row of bushes like the currant and gooseberry bushes in a country garden—not very extensive, perhaps fifty yards along the top of the slope, and it was from this row of bushes apparently that the sound of digging and of men's voices came. The shifting of the clouds for an instant enabled him to see a steady dropping of something upon the bushes like the alighting of a wavering flight of birds. Then he knew what it was. They were constructing an earth-work!

A group of men—soldiers—passed him with measured tread, going toward the Union camp. He soon heard them, a short distance below him, exchanging challenge and reply. It was the relief picket guard! He was inside the enemy's lines!

He lay quietly for a moment after making this discovery, holding his breath as if to see what would happen; for the revelation came upon him so like a thunder-clap that it seemed as if the attention of the rebels so near him must be attracted by it. Then he began to feel safer.

"Well, since I am here I might as well see what I can. Those fellows are so busy they won't be apt to notice me. I'll slip off to the right here and see how far this thing

goes in that direction. I can see the end of it to the left—only it seems—yes, it rounds off with the hill toward the rebel camp. Now for the right!”

Everything favored him and he soon gained the right rear of the earthwork. As he lay there a battery of artillery came up at a slow walk, so close to him that it seemed as though the wheels almost grazed his cheek. The guns were wheeled into the space behind the earthwork.

“Ah!” said Tom softly. “A battery! Right in front of our regiment too! Well, if they knock the head off of me to-morrow—if I get back to-night, by George!—I will know what hit me anyhow! There’s some satisfaction in knowing what disease you die of.”

He lay watching the work for some little time, taking in all the points the darkness would let him gain—for the men were working without lights. Then he turned and took such survey as he could of the ground between the battery and the spot where his regiment lay. Then he turned again to watch the work at the battery.

“They’ll give us the very devil to-morrow, and we’ve no sign of a protection—all smooth as a bare floor! I wonder if I can get back aagin? I must try it. The best way, I reckon, will be to slip along the line of trees by the lane.”

The trees were dwarfs, quite close together, with bushes and weeds in the interstices. Tom thought he had escaped—had passed the picket line in safety—when he was suddenly brought to a dead standstill with his heart in his throat by the apparition of a man with his gun at a “ready” standing within ten feet of him. Where had he come from? Out of the ground?

However, it made no difference where he came from.

There he was, and he was evidently looking straight at Tom and prepared to shoot, although it was so dark just at the moment that it was hard to say which way he was looking.

Tom stood motionless.

“Well,” said the man finally, solving Tom’s doubt, “why don’t you come on?”

“‘Cause ye don’t hold ye’r weepoon to suit me,” replied

Tom instantly. "Ye don't think I'm a-gwine to come on when ye'r holdin' yer gun that a-way, do ye? It looks too almighty liable!"

The sentry replied with a low laugh.

"What' d'ye want down here, anyhow?"

"The captain sent me. He thought he saw something a-movin' down by the creek bridge an' he told me to go down an' see what it war. Says I, 'See here, captain, there's them pickets down thar. Why don't you send them?' 'Why, they can't leave their posts,' says he. You're a mighty long time a-larnin' about this war business,' says he."

The man laughed softly again.

"He ruther had ye thar, didn't he?"

"Yes! Well, ye see I don't take no pride in this soldier business anyhow. 'Taint in my line, ye see. So I don't care so much about the fine pints.'" And Tom coolly seated himself on a large stone back in the shadow of the overhanging boughs. "But I reckon I've got to larn some of it. I've gone into this thing for business till we clean out these everlastin' abolitionists and nigger thieves. Soon's we do that I'm a-gwine to quit. But I jist naturally hate a nigger thief!"

"So do I."

"You bet! I'm ready to stay till we clean 'em all out. Then I'm done soldiering. I hain't got no taste for to be ordered around by no high-steppin' rooster with grimeracks onto him till he looks like a ringmaster into a circus.

"'Tis curus, hain't it?"

"Lord how they're heads is swelled!"

"That's so!"

"Now my notion of life's different. All I want is some good dogs, and niggers to raise the crop, an' I kin superintend it, ye know. Then in the fall I want jist a plumb month a-huntin' up on Black Water—deer and bear, ye know. Plenty o' hog an' hominy, ye know, an' a barrel o' hard cider in the cellar! Hey?"

"Now that's solid comfort, that is!"

"Course it is. 'Taint s'much glory an' big talk as this, but it's a powerful sight more fillin', an' comfortable."

"You bet it is. Do you go every year up to Black Water?"

"Been goin' there for the last five year."

"Kill anything?"

"Kill anything? Well I should say so. Deer and bear. Well, last fall I had the biggest time with a bear. Gimme a chaw tobacker, will ye? Thank ye—that's the kind I like. Regular old original nat'ral leaf. No molasses to make ye sick at the stomach. Well, sir, ye never saw a feller in a worse fix nor I was. It was just about a mile back from Suggses clearin'. Say, do ye hear anything down that a-way?"

"Pears like I did hear something!"

"Oh, well, maybe its a hog. Let me know if ye hear it agin. Well, ye see, the dogs set up the everlastinest yelpin' all at oncet, an' it was to'rds evenin' an' I had been trampin' over the mountains all day an' I was right smart tired, ye see. However, I know'd by the noise they was a-makin' that—ye don't see nothin' more, do ye?"

"Seems like it's movin' down toward the Yanks, now."

"I'll bet a red apple it's a hog. I didn't enlist to hunt no hogs. Well, as I was sayin'," continued Tom, crossing his legs comfortably and thanking his lucky stars that in the thick gloom made by the overhanging boughs blue could not be distinguished from gray, "as I was sayin', I started over to where the dogs was, and they was just a-barkin' their ears off. I give ye my word I never heerd dogs bark like that before! By the way, I'm sorry I didn't bring my applejack down with me. I've got a bottle of the kind that'd make yer hair curl."

"Never mind, I've got some whisky here," and the guileless sentry swung his canteen around to the front. "It's the genuine article—some of that old Monongahela whisky."

"Sorry, and I'm much obliged, but I can't never drink none o' that Pittsburg whisky. Don't seem to have the awakening sperit about it. D'ye ever notice it? Never has no effect but ter give me a misery in my stomach. D'ye see anything more o' that hog?"

"Derned ef I don't believe it's a-comin' up this way!"
And the sentry peered earnestly down the lane.

"Well, I reckon I'd better go on down an' see what it is. How far is it off?"

"Not more'n a hundred yards, I jedge by the noise."

"Well, I'll go an' see, ef it's a hog I'll give ye a hind quarter."

"Goin' without a gun?"

"Oh, I reckon I won't need none."

"Ye might."

"Yes, that's so. 'Spose ye lend me your'n. I'll give it to ye when I come back, an' then I'll tell ye the rest of that bear story. By Gemini! It war the tightest place ever I war in! You stand right here and don't ye move onless ye hear me holler for help. Then you come a-bilin', for ye kin bet I don't never holler 'less I got something to holler fer."

The sentry gave up his gun very contentedly, and as Tom sauntered off down the lane he sat down on the rock and solaced himself with a generous draught of his Monongahela whisky.

After proceeding a hundred yards or so Tom found a convenient opening in the shrubbery and slipped through to the side next his own camp. Not till then did he draw a free breath, which he made good use of in a swift run till he got near the Union lines. Then, striking off to the right, he found the place whence he had gone forth, and in a half-hour he reached his own company street. Captain Bancroft was standing in the tent door.

"Hello, Tom! Is that you?"

"Yes."

"You were reported for absence without leave at roll call to-night."

"Yes. I had other fish to fry," replied Tom imperturbably.

"What are you doing with that gun?"

"I'm going to take it to my tent. Good-night."

"Warm work to-morrow, Tom!"

"Warmer than some of the boys think for, in my opinion."

"I'm afraid so. Good-night."

Nat loomed up.

"Where in the world have you been, Tom?"

"Over in the enemy's lines."

"Where?"

"In the rebel's camp."

"Where'd you get that gun?"

"Borrowed it from a rebel picket!" And then he told his adventure briefly.

"Well, you must 'a been born to be hung, for I'm blest if I believe they'll ever shoot you!"

"Not if my legs hold out."

"No, nor you won't run away, either!"

It was two hours after this before Tom got to sleep. He lay awake thinking, not of the events of the evening, but of Margaret Henderson and of what might happen to-morrow. And the boy's heart softened and was filled with pure and gentle aspirations: and they followed him in his sleep and colored his dreams.

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRES ARE LIGHTED.

WHAT is the matter with John Wesley Hammond, the mild young chaplain, that he quits his knees at the side of the dying every now and then and seizes a musket to fight like a fiend incarnate? Is it not enough that laymen must stain their hands with their brother's blood? Shall God's minister also maim and mutilate and perhaps send his fellow-man all unrepentant and unforgiven before the dread bar of a just judge? Has he not enough to do to pray for those who are passing so swiftly from the scenes of their weakness and transgressions?

But his face shines with a sort of exaltation, and if any man there is unconscious of danger it is the soft-mannered young preacher. And his lips move, and he mutters. What is this he is saying to himself?

"Shall I not do my part? Is not this a holy war? Is it not God's battle? Shall the bondman stretch out his shackles to me in entreaty and shall I forbear to strike them off? I bear you no personal ill-will, poor, misguided creatures! But He has written it that through your destruction He will work His awful will! Yes—yes—through blood and groans and sufferings! Ay! Ay! Andrew McQuirk, I am with you!"

"Ay, that you are John, Hammond! But this is not your work. You've work there with the poor souls that need your prayers before they meet their God, and it's with them that you have your place! It is appointed to each man, his place; and in His providence I am put here to fight and you are ordered there to pray—although I know that it would be hard for me, too, to be here without lifting a hand against these sons of Belial! But go you to your work."

And the young man accepts the admonition of his elder brother and goes back to try to faithfully do his sad duty. And he does it faithfully; and bravely, too. And it would seem that if all the terrors of hell were to suddenly confront him he would not be dismayed, so cool and calm is he in all this roar and din of battle—with spouting blood and quivering wounds and shriek and groan and curse of agonized and dying men. He tries to do his appointed work, but as the stress of the battle grows more severe, he leaves his knees and continues his prayer unconsciously as he crushes the skulls of the cannoneers and breaks their limbs and defaces God's image with a zeal that burns like a fever.

The air seems filled with singing musket balls and booming round shot and screaming shells, flying as if from a devil's hand, to tear and rend and kill. The grass is splashed and dyed with blood, and the red drops are spattered on the stems and limbs of trees where, sometimes, fragments of human flesh still palpitating clung as if they were holding fast to life. Men are rushing to and fro, washed by the waves of the conflict now high now low; and they shout and yell, some with horrible blasphemy and some with unintelligible roaring which voices no words, but is as the cry of a wild beast or a maniac. Never before having witnessed such a scene or felt such influences they seem like creatures born to it and without ever having known anything else.

In the midst of it all ever and ever there comes to them a glimpse of smiling orchards and waving wheat fields shimmering on the softened summer-glare; and toddling children plucking flowers and laughing in glee as the fleecy thistledown sails upon the scented air out of reach of chubby outstretched hands. Or of peaceful, gently gliding brooks with shoals of swift-darting minnows and borders of waving, purple-blossomed flags, where they have fished and waded on summer afternoons that were so long and dreamy they seemed a lifetime steeped in golden sunshine. And how strange that memory should bring back at such a time the visions which their childhood saw when they lay prone upon

their backs watching the wool-white clouds slowly floating beneath the blue sky!

Is it not a strange thing that while men are engaged in the awful business of killing each other and the wild battle is swirling about them and their every sense seems to be quickened to the most perfect working by the fierce, bloody struggle in which they are engaged—is it not a strange thing that in men's minds at such a moment as this the picture of carnage is photographed upon a background of humble, homely, tender recollections of childhood scenes.

In the death-throe the end of life clasps hands with the beginning, and in what is or may be the approach to the end Death seems to woo in the guise of childhood! It is a rosy-cheeked boy who stands before the victim and conjures him with spells of sunlight filtering through waving trees; and nestling groups of flowers; and humming bees; and glancing birds; and balmy rest in the tall grass.

Does it not seem perfectly natural and logical to every man who has passed through battle that the great pure-hearted Confederate, Jackson, should have murmured the wish of a child, as his life-blood ebbed away—"Let us cross the river and rest in the shade of the trees?" The leaden ball smote the silver cord and the blessed mercy of heaven struck down the grim warrior as a mask is dropped off, and took to its loving bosom the simple happy innocent tired child, playing among the flowers that bordered the rippling waters, and gave it rest beneath the shade of the trees!

It seemed to Tom that he had not been asleep more than a moment when the bugle sounded the reveille and with his comrades he hastily tumbled out into the company street to answer to his name at rollcall amid the rattling of the drums. He regretted, however, that his slumber had been long enough and sound enough to dispel the gentle, tender visions which filled his imagination when he fell asleep; and that in their stead came the cold, recognition of the ugly realities that he must face, and that would not down. His heart beat with

great leaps and bounds, almost painfully; and a feeling of shivering excitement took such possession of him that he glanced furtively at his comrades to see whether they had perceived it and were inclined to set it down to timidity. He struggled with it while he waited for his coffee which was hastily preparing, and was annoyed to find that the hot stimulant had not driven it away. He knew he was not a coward—at least he thought he knew he was not—and yet why should he shiver and why should his teeth chatter till he was fain to close them tightly to stop their noise? No, he wasn't a coward—he would see this thing through, without disgrace, though he died for it!

But it was very unpleasant. He was much tempted, when one of his comrades, already half-drunk, offered him a pull at a canteen filled with whisky; but he resisted and shook his head mutely, while the thought—"I'll not be indebted to whisky for any courage I may be able to show to-day—if I show any at all, by George! I don't know what in the world is the matter with me!"

In an unconceivably short space of time the regiment was under arms and in position; the men standing "at ease" but keeping their alignment. They were waiting for orders to move forward to attack the slope up which Tom had crawled, with what had seemed to be such foolish and useless daring, the night before. The men saw with natural murmurs of astonishment the earthwork which our hero had inspected. And Tom was surprised, also, to observe that a second earthwork—something a trifle better than a line of mere rifle-pits—had been thrown up during the night, about an eighth of a mile below the battery, which, it will be remembered, crowned the gently sloping hill. The new work on the right rested on the lane (beyond which was the impenetrable thicket) separated from it by the narrow width of a small pond; but to the left it swept clear around the knoll, lapping over the left of the earthwork in which the battery was stationed, a considerable distance.

"They must have worked mighty lively after I left to get that done," said Tom. "I s'pose we've got to charge that thing—and with that battery behind them we'll

have a healthy job of it. Well, I suppose it's got to be done—but I know of a half-dozen things I'd rather do!"

Captain Miles Bancroft stood at the head of the company, calm and collected, but paler than usual. He called Tom to him and stepping aside, in front of his men, he took him by the hand.

"Tom," he said in a low voice, "I don't think I'm superstitious nor cowardly, but it is only wise to take a little thought for the future. Somehow I have a sort of a feeling that I won't get through this day's work without getting hurt in some way. It may be a foolish notion. I don't believe in presentiments. But still, you know, we can't tell what may happen. If anything does happen to me, Tom, if I get killed or mortally hurt, I mean, I want you to promise me," and his grasp tightened on Tom's hand, "I want you to promise me that you will tell Miss Henderson that my last thought was of her—for it will be!"

Tom grew paler, and in spite of all his efforts to look Miles in the eye, he could not.

"I hope you won't get hurt——"

"I know you do—but I may. I have had no word from her since we left home—but I have loved her more since then than I ever dreamed that I could love anybody—and—and—I feel sure somehow that she loves me—though she never told me so!"

Why should the man press the boy so? Couldn't he see that he, too, loved her? Or did he think that it was a mere foolish boy's love, not worthy to be considered like a man's love, at such a time?

For an instant the blood had rushed to Tom's cheek and his eyes had met Bancroft's, almost fiercely. But in that look he read such sadness, such unhappiness, that he looked away again.

"Will you promise?"

A pressure of the hand and a sign of assent with the head was the response; and loosening his clasp Tom went slowly back to his place, with his eyes still bent on the ground. Miles looked after him sadly and made as if he would follow him to say something further, but he checked himself and resumed his post.

"Captain Bancroft, we are to charge the works in front of us! The signal will be the firing of one gun from Battery 'B' on the hill behind the second brigade!"

And the adjutant rode on down the line to repeat the order.

Desultory firing was going on among the skirmishers all along the line. Occasionally a sharp volley, as if from a platoon or company was heard. At which the men would straighten themselves up and grow visibly more excited. And still the battle did not begin. The two armies were getting their bearings. The wait was a long one, and a cruel trial to inexperienced soldiers.

The sound of galloping horses came from the left and down the line the commanding general was seen coming, surrounded by his staff and followed by his escort. The men broke into a cheer as they took courage from his infectious calmness at such a trying moment, to which he responded with uncovered head.

A rapid exchange of shots on the skirmish line immediately in front of the regiment made the breath come quicker and the heart beat faster, and the men involuntarily grasped their pieces and sought the mutual strength of the elbow-touch. But the little spat was soon over, and all was silent again in that part of the field.

Presently a group of men came slowly back. As they drew near it was seen that on a stretcher made by fastening the sides of a blanket to muskets, they were carrying the body of a man. They passed Company "A" and then it was seen that the man was dead; with a hole in his forehead red and blue about the edges, where a musket-ball had entered and let out his life. A shudder went through the spectators.

Tom turned deathly sick and would have fallen but for a tremendous exercise of his will of which he was not conscious. He was in an agony of shame and humiliation, for he said to himself:

"My God! I am a coward! Oh, if the earth would only open and swallow me up."

"Why, Tom Bailey! You're scared!" exclaimed Snead, a big, beefy fellow, whose cheeks glowed with

unimpaired color. Tom threw up his head quickly. "Scared!" cried Nat of whose presence Tom was not aware till he spoke. And how cheering to hear his voice. "Scared! Why if you was scared half as bad as Tom or me either, for that matter, you'd run like the devil was after you!"

The men laughed at the sally.

"Of course he's scared!" continued Nat. "It stands him in hand to be scared. He'd be a thunderin' fool if he wasn't! But you'll get your elegant sufficiency of fighting to-day if you'll only stick to Tom Bailey, Mr. Snead!"

Boom!

"Attention! Shoulder arms! Steady there! Forward, march! Steady now—don't run yet! Keep your line! Dress to the *left*!"

"Hold your fire till you get the word, men! As soon as you fire charge on the works!"

It was the colonel, dashing up and down the line and calling out as he rode.

Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!

It was as if the battery on the knoll had also waited for the signal from behind the second brigade, and the screaming shell came flying over the men, making them quiver and stoop. For they had not learned yet that the artillery under such circumstances is not so dangerous as it sounds—not nearly so dangerous as the little, singing, leaden pellets which do not make anything like such a noise.

"Steady there! Heads up! They haven't come within a mile of us! Put that gun down, Moller! Wait for the word!"

"Not so fast there in the center! Steady—and stop that dodging!"

A feathery line of smoke ran along the lower earthwork followed by the sharp rattle of musketry, and the bullets pattered along the front of the line.

"Steady! Dress to the *left*! That's all right—let 'em waste their ammunition!"

Captain Bancroft was getting to be a good deal of a soldier, you see.

His voice could scarcely be heard though he strained till he was red in the face. A dozen batteries in different parts of the field were pounding away all at once, while ten thousand muskets were being fired each minute. The battery in front of the second regiment was hard at it, and rapidly getting the range. The infantry in the earthwork had ceased firing. Battery "B" was pounding away in reply to the rebel artillery, but wildly and without effect. The shells from the two batteries went screaming back and forth but a few feet above the heads of the men—so near that it seemed a miracle that no one was struck. After one or two battles the soldier learns that that is a way shells have and don't mind it much. But it is hard on a new man.

The regiment began to grow restive, and the officers had all they could do, shouting and running up and down the line knocking muskets up with their swords, to keep their men from firing; although it was plain that nothing would come of it but a waste of ammunition. Still they kept on with tolerable steadiness but an accelerated pace. If they would only keep this line for five minutes more!

But five minutes is an age at such a time! The men were utterly ignorant of such scenes, and their excitement was only increased by the fact that they were being shot at, out in the open field, by an enemy under cover, and were not allowed to reply. If they could only fire back—that would give escape to some of their nervousness and excitement. True, nobody was hurt yet, but this can't last long.

"Shall we be shot down like dogs and not attempt to defend ourselves?"

God in heaven! what is this?

A shrill shrieking unheard before fills the air—it is not the singing of a minie ball nor yet the scream of a shell but more horrible than either—and the air is full of it. The sickening thud of balls striking and entering human flesh is heard—and men drop down all along the line! The enemy is throwing grape and canister and mowing swaths in the living moving wall of human beings!

That ends it! There is no use in struggling and trying

to make green soldiers keep in line or hold their fire after that!

They fire wildly, some in the air, the cooler ones toward the enemy, but many of the coolest without taking any sort of aim whatever! Then they huddle together in groups like sheep, and reload and fire and load again, while the rebel infantry from their cover pour in volley after volley, well aimed and with fearful effect, and the grape and canister come thicker than ever. Men begin to fly to the rear. The ground is strewn with smitten helpless dead and dying! Miles Bancroft is down! Will Walters, the dapper little fellow, is on his back, the blood gushing out of a great hole in his side—his limbs are jerking about spasmodically while his features are working strangely and horribly. Charlie Hall lies motionless—killed instantly—and a peaceful smile is coming into his dead face. Tom and Nat are loading and firing and encouraging the men to come on.

But it is of no use! In the left wing of the regiment the panic has set in—there go the colors to the rear—the men glance over their shoulders and see the whole regiment in headlong flight. The few obstinate fellows give it up! They rush back pellmell and do not stop till they get to the rear of their old camp again.

Tom and Nat are left alone. They are both cool now, save for their rage at the shameful retreat. They look at each other and, without speaking, shoulder their muskets and turn their backs upon the enemy. A groan of agony draws their attention to Miles. He has a ragged hole in his thigh. They pick him up and bear him back to the field hospital.

Then they come back with perhaps a hundred men of their regiment gathered up here and there, cool now, and bitter; and determined to retrieve their disgrace if a chance offers.

They are just in time to see the fresh troops sent to take the works repulsed. They stand gloomily on the spot of their first formation, watching the poor fellows slaughtered like sheep or flying like cravens. Their hearts grow more bitter and the desire for revenge soon overbears every other feeling, completely driving out all considerations as to their personal safety.

The general is off on another part of the field even more important than this; and there is no one here who knows any more about war than a babe in arms.

"Who's in command around here?" asks Tom.

"God knows," answers Nat. "Anybody, everybody and nobody, so far as I can see!"

"Sort of a free fight, isn't it?"

"Looks like it."

"Well, let's go in!"

"Where?"

"They're going to charge the works again, with two fresh regiments."

"So they are—I see!"

"Well, I believe we can take that battery!"

"How? Show us how and we'll do it or die trying!"

And the men, suddenly grown quiet and determined and dangerous, gather around Tom as he explains his plan.

"Good! We'll try it!"

"Will you take command, Nat?"

"No, but I'll follow you!"

"But think a little. It's worse than charging out here!" cries one of the men.

"I don't care if it is!"

"It's almost certain death!"

"I don't care for that either! I believe we can make it. What do you say, boys, will you try it?"

"We will!"

"Yes," said Nat, "we'll give 'em a whirl, anyhow, just for luck!"

Yesterday they would have been noisy about it. They will never swagger again, but whenever they start hereafter they will be more likely to accomplish what they set out to do.

Tom draws them off to the right, and to the other side of the trees that line the hither side of the lane that runs by the impenetrable thicket. Then he explains more in detail his plan, so that each man understands what is expected of him.

The enemy have ceased firing and are intently watch-

ing the formation of the two regiments that are to essay the third charge upon them. They know that the thicket protects their left flank.

When the two regiments start up the slope Tom moves his men in ranks of four swiftly up the lane, ahead of the line an eighth of a mile. He regulates his movements by those of the two regiments, who present a gallant front, poor fellows! But he keeps ahead of them.

The battery opens with shell and round shot, but the charging column moves on bravely. When it approaches the line of thickly strewn bodies which marks the culmination of the disaster to those who had gone before the men waver perceptibly, and Tom trembles with anxiety.

But they steady themselves and start up on a trot, with trailed arms.

This is the moment Tom has waited for. His men have reached the left flank of the battery, still under cover of the trees. The rebel cannoneers are preparing to load with the fatal grape and canister, but think to play with their victims. They will let this column come much nearer than the others did, and then they will do greater execution. They are chuckling over their anticipated victory and they hear the infantry below cheering as they deliver their first volley at their assailants.

Still the line comes on! The commander of the battery gives the order to load the guns. Tom gives his command in the same breath:

“Forward, double quick, march!”

In an instant his command—a hundred or more men from various companies and regiments, have leaped from their cover, not fifty feet from the guns.

“By the left flank, charge!” shrieks Tom, and his men are upon the gunners, shooting, stabbing with the bayonet and crushing in skulls with the butts of their muskets. The cannoneers fight bravely, but to no purpose. Their assailants have a fearful reckoning to make with them. The struggle is a terrible one! Tom is knocked down with a swab-stock and the man who struck him has his head broken by the barrel of Nat’s gun—the stock has been worn out on other heads.

The surprise was a complete one, and the result of the

exploit is soon told. The rebel infantry turned to see why it was that the artillery was silent. They discovered the cause just as the assailing Union column realized that something favorable for them had happened. The rebels fell into a panic and the charging column gave them a volley to complete their demoralization and with a cheer swept the hill.

But the Confederates cannot permit them to remain there undisturbed. From new coigns of vantage they pour in a hot and withering fire, and charge upon the Union soldiers by brigades. The Federals gather up reinforcements wherever they can. The fatal knoll is covered with dead and dying so thickly that some are piled on top of others, and the waves of advancing and retreating regiments sweep over them, each leaving fresh victims to add to the number. The rebel guns are captured and recaptured, and are used by the Union men and the rebels alternately—as the swab is rammed into the piece by the rebel it is drawn out by the Union soldier; the charge that is driven home by the blue is fired by the gray.

The combatants are almost equally matched and each can only hope for a miracle, for all over the field fierce fighting is going on and no reinforcements can be spared to either side—but neither will yield, and the struggle goes on till hundreds are left to continue the work that thousands begun.

But of what avail? The world knows that sudden reinforcements to the Confederates came pouring in from the Shenandoah Valley and the prophetic vision which Clayton had, a week before, was fulfilled. The battle of Bull Run was lost and through its loss the nation was waked and saved.

As Tom was pursuing his sullen, dogged retreat that evening, just as the dusk was falling, he discovered a wounded man lying under a tree at the roadside. The poor fellow was praying and Tom, thinking he recognized the voice, halted. It was Andrew McQuirk, the Presbyterian minister.

“Ay, lad, is it you?” He raised his bushy brows as he recognized Tom. He went on in a queer jargon,

relapsing into his broad Scotch by times. "The Lord Jehovah reigns! Dinna ye be downcast, my lad! He doeth all things well! Thou'rt a brave lad! Ay! Ay! Ye've the richt stuff in ye! Ye fought the Lord's battle the day, like a mon, though ye've nae spear o' hair on yer chin! I was with thee, lad. I followed ye to the battery, and ye were born to fight Jehovah's battles and flash among his enemies for their destruction like a shining sword! Ye're gude and brave—keep yer soul clean for He has anointed ye! Have ye water?"

Tom had none, but offered whisky from a canteen he had picked up during the day.

"Nae! nae! I cannot tak' it," said the preacher as he smelled it, "it has nae the smell o' the smoke on it! It is no gude—'tis the deil's broth!"

"Dinna be downcast! This is not the last battle ye'll fight in this war! There'll be many to come! But this defeat was the Lord's doing! He sent it for the awakening o' this dull and drowsy people! They will rise and establish His ways in a' this land! He will set His sign over this people, for they will do His will!"

"He is gude and loving-kind! I thank Thee, oh my Lord Jehovah that Thou hast esteemed Thy servant worthy to shed his blood like the blessed martyrs of old, that Thy kingdom might be established and Thy people made free!"

"Go, lad, and save thyself!"

But when Tom left the old Scotchman he was dead; and his grim, stern face shone in the darkness with a ghostly, phosphorescent gleam that sent a new horror to the boy's heart as he glanced over his shoulder and quickened his steps.

CHAPTER XI.

WAS HE BORN TO BE HUNG?

"DIDN'T I say you was born to be hung?"

Tom had plodded many a weary mile that night and it was breaking day when Nat's cheerful salutation fell upon his ear. After the last grand charge by the rebels, which had scattered his comrades in all directions, he found himself surrounded by strangers; and too heart-sick to care to hunt up Company "A" he had wandered hither and thither without any particular aim except perhaps to keep out of the hands of the victorious Confederates who were scouring the field in all directions and following up the retreating Federals as closely as they dared—which was pretty close, as some of the survivors will tell you to this day. In this way the sore and chagrined young corporal seemed to be walking in a dream; and when he was aroused from it by the sound of old McQuirk's praying he found himself again within the enemy's lines. As we have seen, however, he remained to perform the last pious offices for the dying man, with that nonchalant disregard for personal consequences to himself that had at all times characterized him and been a part of his nature, unless we except the morning of that same day when he stood with the regiment awaiting the summons to the onset. And when he stole away from the glimmering, white face of the old Presbyterian lying there so silent and so awful in the darkness, he went with a stealthy step, and a watchful eye, for a long time, till he had reached the rear of the retreating army.

We have seen the boy rapidly assimilating experiences of a startling and sternly imperative sort, and we have

found him growing quickly into manhood from the moment when he learned on the threshold of the parlor of the judge's house that he had a rival—the moment when he first imagined, too, perhaps, that he loved and loved ardently and deeply. During his service in the camp and before he was ever under fire he was daily becoming more and more manly—among men, he was adopting their manners, losing the awkwardness and rawness of style usual to boyhood, while in thought and mind he was far outstripping the majority of those with whom he was associated. The affair at Bartlett's bridge had still further developed him and given him confidence in himself and weight among his fellows. The awful experience of the day he had just passed had solidified him and taken from him whatever there might be of a boyish tendency to overrate himself. He had lost no particle of his self-confidence; but he had learned caution, and that the sober view of things was the wiser one to take. He came out of the battle better fitted for his new profession than he was when he went into it. In brief he was clay ready to receive the impression and quick to harden in the new shape given by the swift working hand of events. He thought that the experience had made him old—as it had—and gray-headed, as it had not. He was surprised to find a few days afterward that there were after all no new seams and wrinkles in his face. During the struggle on Battery Knoll, as the boys soon came to call it, he thought he could actually feel the deep furrows growing in his face and brow.

Still, he had a great deal to learn and he learned a very important part of it while he listened to the monologue of the dying preacher in the falling twilight. There was to him in the old man's words a startling revelation of the significance of the work in which he was engaged. He had enlisted first, because on general principles he was a citizen of the republic and desired to see the effort to destroy it crushed out, and was willing to do what he might to aid in putting down the rebellion. In the second place he was by nature so chivalric that the idea of human slavery was repugnant to him, although he had never thought deeply upon the subject.

Then he had another motive, perhaps it was the strongest, and that was a desire to get away from the humdrum existence at Clayton and see something of the world. Of course when the opportunity to do so took a form promising so much that was romantic and adventurous it was irresistible as it ought to have been and always will be to every properly organized youth—to all boys except those monstrosities who are born wise and prudent and—selfish. He enjoyed the life; enjoyed the successes he achieved in quickly acquiring the drill and picking up the points of routine which go so far to make a good soldier—enjoyed even the discomforts of the life—there was a novelty about them that gave them great zest. He knew to his satisfaction in a by-and-large sort of way that he was doing the right thing, but he valued the feeling more because it contributed to his general comfort than because he was strenuously anxious to do a great work in a grand, heroic way. He was not quite living up to his powers but he was unconscious of the fact and nothing had seemed to arouse him to a realization of it.

He had heard a great many political speakers and had read the newspapers and could have told with sufficient precision what the war was about and why he should be a soldier in the Union army instead of the Confederate. He understood Fielding's earnestness, but didn't enter into his enthusiasm. He recognized McQuirk's zeal, but it was as a man may perceive—through the window—the glow of light at another man's hearthstone and yet not feel the warmth that comes from the fire. He might have gone on in this careless, boyish way, fighting bravely and successfully to the close of the war—doing just as good service perhaps, but not doing it with such intelligent knowledge of what it meant, if he had not happened to spend the brief hour with poor McQuirk.

The solemn earnestness with which the old man spoke of the holiness of the cause—that it was the working out of the awful will of the Lord Jehovah—impressed him as the same words had never before done. They lifted the veil and he gazed with uncovered eyes upon that of which he had up to that time only seen the imperfect outlines.

He felt the warm, living hand clasp his own and a new strength was given him to battle for the right.

But was the old man wandering when he declared that the lad was "anointed" to a great work? Was he simply dealing in the figures of speech to which his long service in the church had accustomed him, and which, boiled down and stripped of lofty verbiage, only meant that he was, perhaps, unusually well qualified for a soldier's life? Tom tried to think so, but the solemn manner of the preacher which was as if he was an inspired prophet proclaiming a message from on high had an effect which he could not shake off. In connection with it was Tom's own recognition of the fact that he had been successful—more successful than any of his comrades had been. He tried to reason with himself, saying that any one of them under the same circumstances would have done the same things just as well as he had done them; but reason as he would he could not throw off the impression the old man had made on him.

There are very few of us who are not affected seriously by the solemn messages given us by a dying man, even when we feel that doubtless his mind is wandering. His feet are laved by the waters of that mysterious river which flows between the here and the hereafter. In a sense—in part at least—he is already of the other world. Who can tell that by the subtle connection between the mortal and the immortal—the spirit which has perhaps already opened its eyes in the other world and the frail body which has not yet ceased altogether to perform its functions in this world—who can tell that by that subtle link not yet severed the spirit may not send to us through the dying body a message taken from the revelation it encounters there? Did the preacher simply voice a conviction he had formed on the battlefield? Or was it given him in that dread moment to read in the register of heaven the entry of the lad's name and the purpose for which he was sent into the world? If others might have done as well as he, the fact remained that they had not done so. If the circumstances were all that they required, was it not true that the circumstances had not been afforded them? Did it not prove that he was

specially selected? Tom was not much of a believer in accidents. He had never relied upon chance to help him out. To him things were ordered from the beginning; there was no doubt of that; precisely what it was that was ordered—the point was to find *that* out.

All in all the dying Scotchman had done Tom an important service in imbuing him with a sort of holy enthusiasm in the cause, making him to understand that it really meant something more than the mere resistance to an attempt to overthrow a government of man's construction. And he did him a further service in showing him that, perhaps, he was serving out an appointed destiny, and had put his hand unconsciously to a work whereunto he was divinely sent. And this conviction, or semi-conviction, clung to him, even if the evident ponderousness of its weight did very soon disappear. He learned to carry the load, as was natural with him in manner and under whatever responsibility, with grace and ease and no apparent effort.

It was the early dawn. The boy was weary and was plodding along half-asleep, passing by many little groups who had gathered by the wayside around fires hastily lighted, to talk over with bitterness and shame the result of the battle and to look forward to the future with dismal forebodings. He passed crippled horses and dead ones; wagons mired and abandoned by frightened teamsters and wagons mired and surrounded still by angry and profane drivers too obstinate to give them up; here and there a piece of artillery; very frequently a musket; almost constantly canteens and haversacks and cartridge-boxes and overcoats and blankets, all cast away and thrown aside by men flying panic-stricken. In all his weary tramp he had seen nothing nor heard anything to cheer him till he heard Nat's cordial inquiry:

"Didn't I say you was born to be hung?"

"Good-morning, Sergeant Kellogg. You are up early!"

"Rather, yes! The sweet air was so inviting and the songs of the birds so enchanting that I couldn't resist!"

"That'll do very well for a blacksmith!"

"Are you out for a stroll for your health?"

"A little something in that way."

"Yes—I thought it would be healthy myself to stroll a little, yesterday evening—about the same time you came to the same conclusion, I reckon."

"I hope you didn't overdo it. The trouble with some folks is that when they need exercise they take too much, and do themselves more harm than good. Now, you look as if you had strolled at the rate of about thirty miles an hour. That's overdoing it!"

"That depends, my son, on the necessities of the case! There are times when you are so infernally particular about your health—when it is in such peril, you see, that gentle exercise don't quite fill the bill——"

"Still, I scarcely think that your extreme energy was justifiable."

"Well, the last I saw of *you*, you was goin' like the devil beating tan-bark! That's what saved *me*! The Johnnies stopped to look at you, and while they was betting that you could beat a loose locomotive, wide-open and the switch locked, I took French leave!"

"Then I have saved your life?"

"Well—yes!"

"I'm glad of it. It isn't much, but it's the first thing I ever did save. It's a beginning!"

"Thank you!"

"Don't mention it! It's not of the slightest consequence."

"Oh, you be blowed!" cried Nat, in a broad grin; overjoyed to find Tom alive and in such high spirits.

The truth is the sound of Nat's voice had brought about a natural revulsion from the somberness of the thoughts Tom had been filled with all night to the height of absurd exhilaration.

"Speaking of saving," observed Tom, "did you manage to save anything to eat?"

"Ah, when the Kellogg family gets left on the grub question just call my attention to it, will you?"

"Well, you mercenary wretch, will you sell me something?"

"Do you see that coffee-pot on the fire there?"

"That's the loveliest spectacle I ever set eyes on!"

"It's mine!"

"Good!"

"Good? I should say so! It's full of the best and strongest coffee you ever met anywhere in your life!"

"You interest me!"

"Bilin' hot!"

"Ah!"

"I'm sorry you're in such a hurry! I was going to ask you to take a cup, but if you must be going, why good-by! Take care of yourself!"

"If it's all the same to you, you needn't worry about me! I have concluded to stay here awhile!"

"It is a nice spot!"

"Beautiful!"

"Have you cast your optic over the scenery?"

"I have viewed the landscape o'er with a great deal of pleasure!"

"Exactly! But if you hadn't been in such a hurry comin' along you'd have seen more. You can view a landscape much more o'er-er when you take things leisurely. But maybe you had a pressing engagement?"

"I had! Or rather, that is to say, I had a caller whom I wished to avoid. A creditor! Thin party, skeleton suit with a sickle in his hand and an unpleasant sort of a grin on his face!"

"Ah! saw the same party, myself!"

"Yes. He *said* he was looking for a fat man—friend of his runs a sulphur-pit and fire was getting low!"

"The devil!"

"I think that's the name of your friend! Well, old Bonesey claimed my account was due. Wanted me to pay it. I objected——"

"Yes—it's a way you have, I'm told! Never pay what you owe, if you can help it!"

"Exactly! Don't intend to pay this fellow till the very last."

"Yes?"

"Yes. So to avoid high words and unpleasant feelings I lit out!"

"He followed?"

"Not far! I was too speedy—too handy with my legs!" And without a smile the two friends jested at the ex-

periences of the day before, while they ate their breakfast. Then they started out to find their regiment.

It was not an easy task. But they argued correctly that, as their term of enlistment was about up, they would find their comrades in Washington. And they did find them, after a search of nearly thirty-six hours, and were received with a wild welcome. They had been given up as dead or prisoners.

They found that Bancroft's wound was a very serious one. By great good fortune he had been brought from the field and was in hospital. It was a question whether his leg could be saved from amputation, but the surgeon, our old friend Woods, had promised to do his best. Old Fielding, too, was in hospital. He had got a cut over the eye, which, with the high state of nervous excitement that he had worked himself into over the war, had sent him to the little white cot with a great fever.

Dick Drummond had got a flesh wound, Sam Jamieson was likely to lose his arm, Aleck Anderson had six holes through his clothes, etc., etc. The news was all retailed to the friends, concluding with the announcement that the regiment was ordered to Camp Chase at Columbus to be mustered out, and that Bob Snead was missing, never having been seen after the first fire.

"I saw him," said Nat. "He ran like a whitehead, the great beef! He's the fellow that said you were afraid, Tom."

"Poor fellow!" replied Tom. He was wondering if the awful terror he had experienced was not enough to make a man run, what on earth could be the sensation which would suffice for that purpose? And he felt sorry for Snead—needlessly, for the fellow was a bully.

In a few more days they were to start back to Ohio. They had nearly all agreed to re-enlist "for three years or during the war," but stipulated for a furlough of a few days to go home and arrange business affairs.

They were encamped with thousands of others just north of the city on what has since come to be called Columbia Heights. The day before they were to start home Tom and Nat, trying to get a wink of sleep under their hot tent, were aroused by a tremendous shouting

and hurrahing in which the whole camp seemed to be participating. They ran to the door in time to see a tall, angular, homely man, who sat his horse with remarkable grace, ride by, surrounded by a brilliant array of officers and soldiers. He had his hat off and bowed right and left, while a sad, anxious smile lit up his careworn face. His horsemanship struck Nat. While his brilliantly uniformed attendants rode English fashion, with their knees bent, the plain man's stirrup-leathers were so long that his toes just touched the brasses. But his heels were out, and it was evident that his seat was firm, although his big, raw-boned thoroughbred was vicious and fractious.

"He knows how to ride," said Nat.

"Don't you know who it is?" asked Tom.

"No! Who is it?"

"Why Lincoln—the President!"

"What, old Abe?" Nat had not thought to look at his face. "So it is! Hurrah for old Abe!" and his stentorious shout won a special recognition from the President.

The cavalcade halted in front of the colonel's tent and that gentleman bustled about like a man possessed by the demon of unrest. The President! He had done no other colonel such an honor! He must have heard—

"Colonel, you have a young fellow in your regiment I want to see. He's a corporal, I think, by the name of Bailey!"

"Tom Bailey! Tom Bailey!" and the boys sent up another shout—for Tom was popular with them.

"That's the man," said the President with a gratified smile.

Tom was brought before him. He stood, perfectly at his ease, with his hat in his hand.

"Are you Tom Bailey?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Corporal Bailey, who defended Bartlett's bridge?"

"I helped to defend the bridge, sir!"

"And the man who led the charge on Battery Knoll?"

"Yes, sir, I was in the charge."

"Will you let me shake hands with you?"

It was said with such sincere, unaffected deference, and the request was made with such a wistful look from the sad eyes, as if the President almost doubted whether he was worthy of such an honor and yet desired it very much, that the tears sprang to Tom's eyes.

"Why, Mr. President, I wanted to ask leave to take *your* hand!"

"I am the one who is honored, corporal! The politicians have made me President, but the Almighty has made you a leader! You rank me!"

Tom started. This was what McQuirk said, only in different words.

"Can I do anything for you, Captain Bailey?"

"Corporal——"

"Captain! I will commission you a captain in the regular army, to-day!"

Then such another shouting, in the midst of which Tom stood pale and embarrassed, his eyes shining with love for this man whom he had never seen before. He was ready to die for him, now.

"Can I do anything for you, captain?" he asked again.

Tom swallowed the lump in his throat.

"I would like to ask one thing, sir!"

"Ask it!"

"I would like to ask you not to put me in the regular army. I would rather stay with the boys, here. We're all going to re-enlist."

If the boys shouted before, they roared now.

"I guess you're right," said the President after a pause. "You'll do your duty, wherever you are. But remember to call on me if you ever need my help."

And again shaking hands, he rode off.

PART III.

THE FIERY FURNACE.

CHAPTER XII.

ETHEL LYNDE.

A TREMENDOUS clatter of hoofs came ringing up the pike, startling the hushed quiet of the night and sending echoes flying to and fro through the sleeping countryside till the uproar fairly filled the entire valley. Away down the road which rolled over the gently sweeping swells of the rounded hills, on the summit of the highest ridge within sight, at a point where the white line of the highway showed like a narrow lute-string between somber masses of dark cedars clustering on either side—right at this point, simultaneously with the first sound of the clattering, nervous hoof-beats there careered over the summit and flashed down the hither slope and so passed out of sight in the hollow below a swiftly moving clump of darkness like the shadow of a cloud upon a mountain side; only of more rapid motion. A moment later, and upon a nearer rise of the road a smaller, detached, solitary spot, fast-fleeing, rose and crossed and fell again into obscurity, soon followed by the heavier, noisier mass, with more ponderous but still energetic and determined movement. Then came shouts and calls muffled by the distance and finally the sound of rapid single-firing of guns or carbines. And the dewy night air which gave such hollow resonance to the barking of the awakened house dogs at the farmhouses for a mile around, seemed to clutch each weapon by the throat and

shoke the life out of the report it made; so that the firing fell upon the ear like the snapping of so many blacksnake whips. And the voices, shouting and calling, came up thin, and almost ghostly.

The sentry on the picket-line stopped full in the glare of the moonlight falling on the road and stood idly and carelessly looking toward the little valley whence the noise came, as if he had no particular interest in it, and in point of fact was not impressed that it was at all out of harmony with the scene and the hour. And indeed it did not seem to be of a nature that might not be expected as a matter of course, under the circumstances. The flooding moonlight was so weird; and the dotting clumps of dense, dwarf cedars here and there, along the roadside and grouped in the fields and crowning the slopes were so uncanny; and the pike itself was so unnaturally white and still and silvery that, when one looked up to the deep softness of the sky in which no cloud could be seen, and drank in the soft, sensuous air of a warm, glorious December night peculiar to and yet rare in the latitude, and all these influences combined had obtained full mastery of the senses the only surprise possible at any happening was that it could be expected to be startling.

But it aroused Tom like the firing of a piece of artillery at his sleeping ear. He had not been wrapped in slumber, but was so buried in a reverie that one seeing him might readily suppose he had lost consciousness. He had gone outside the line, perhaps twenty yards, and thrown himself upon his side in the dense sward that rolled in stripes on either hand along the road. The figure that thus displayed itself, measuring the upward swell of a minor ridge, was fuller and manlier than when we last saw it; and the moonlight made a pretty play of glancing beams upon his buttons and the bullion straps upon his well-set shoulders, and flashed up and down the length of the sword that lay by his side, from the big brass hilt to the shining tip of the scabbard.

It is tolerably safe to assume the subject of his reverie; since we know that from the April day that he took his leave of Margaret Henderson in the judge's parlor in

Clayton, even though nearly two years have passed, he has had with romantic persistence but one topic to dream on. We may be sure that the reverie could not have been a bitter one, for he was too much of a man to brood in the weakness of self-pity; nor could it have been a rapturous delight, for he was all too calm for that. It had for him merely a soothing and lulling effect, and in that respect was like the moonlight which steeped and soothed the landscape and all that thereon was. If he stopped to analyze it he doubtless came to the conclusion that it was a pleasant thing which served to pass away the time and did no particular harm. But the chances are that he didn't stop to analyze his feeling at all; being at the time and in that respect like the pigeon softly cooing in the sunshine and neither knowing nor caring to know why it found life so pleasant.

But if Tom was a healthy young animal who could enjoy the goods which the gods provided without impairing his mental or physical digestion by useless worrying as to the whys and wherefores and the component parts of each of his pleasurable and comfortable sensations, he was no less a good soldier; and like a flash of lightning he had fled into the lines, after a hasty glance toward the spot from whence came the sound of firing, and had roused his reserve guard which he brought tramping down to the front with the hasty thud, thud, thud of the double-quick, and the tinkling sound of loose pieces of metal upon the trailed pieces and the dull clash of the bayonet against the cloth-covered canteen. Having reached the point where he had been lying, held in the bonds of an idle dream, he halted his men to decide upon the next step.

"What are you going to do, captain?" asked his burly lieutenant, coming up and dwarfing his superior officer—something as a big sluggish three-master in port looms up over the sentient little tug alongside—only not quite so much so.

"Tell off ten men from the right, and you stay here with them. Keep them well in hand—I'll take the rest and go and see what all that bobbery's about."

"I wouldn't, if I was you," replied the lieutenant. "It may be just a trap to catch you."

"I don't care if it is, I'm going, anyhow;" and in a moment he had deployed his men as skirmishers on each side of the pike. Then giving his orders in a low, sharp tone he sung out the command to move forward at double-quick, and with a wave of his hand to his lieutenant he trotted off down the center of the pike, abreast of his men.

"Good-by, Nat!"

"Good-by, Tom! But this ain't no way—to leave me here!" growled his subordinate.

All this, of course, was done in much less time than it takes to tell it; and from the moment when the clatter of hoofs first smote the ear down to the time when Tom's line of skirmishers, flitting across the fields through the moonlight, disappearing in and reappearing from the gloom of the cedar-clumps, till they were seen to move more cautiously and the sound of their footfalls had ceased, and they had, nearing the scene of the firing, disappeared finally, was a very short period indeed. Nat placed his men on the sward by the side of the road where they would not be so conspicuous as on the pike, and glancing up and down his picket-line to see that his silent sentries were pacing with soldierly regularity to and fro on their beats, he took his stand square in the center of the pike—the best point from which to keep his lookout.

Soon a solitary horse and rider were seen to cross the ridge on the further side of which the firing came from, flying, as Nat judged, right into Tom's hands. Then all was quiet for a moment, till the flash of the discharge of a dozen carbines embroidered the dark cedars on the right with splashes of golden flame.

"They've fired on him!" said Nat to himself as he drew his breath hard, between his clinched teeth. "Yes, and they've fired on the wrong man, by the piper that played before Moses!" he added grimly, as he heard a shout and saw Tom's skirmishers swiftly climbing the slope before them making for the spot from whence the firing came. Then the clatter of a horse's hoofs again came to his ears, and a steed, riderless now, galloped easily toward him.

"Catch that horse, you fellows," he said, stepping aside to let the creature pass. The firing became more rapid.

Spat!

Spat! Spat! Spat!

Spat! Spat!

Spat! Spat! Spat! Spat! Spat!

Away off in the distance the clatter of hoof beats, this time going rapidly and growing fainter and fainter.

"Aw-haw, me laddy-bucks! I told you you had fired on the wrong man!" chuckled Nat. "Some o' you lead that horse down the pike. Maybe they'll need it. And—by the Great Horn Spoon! it's got a side-saddle on it! Now how the thunder do you s'pose the captain knew it was a woman? Great Cæsar!"

There is very little more to tell of what had happened. Tom had pushed his men, rapidly but carefully, till he had reached the slope beyond which the firing was going on. Here he had halted with a view to a reconnoissance so that he might not walk too promptly into the trap which Nat had suspected. Before, however, he could make this reconnoissance, a horse dashed over the ridge and down the slope and was caught by Tom.

The rider was a woman!

And a young woman, too.

She sat upon her horse with the ease and confidence of a bird on a swinging twig; and her willowy form swayed with the motion of her steed as if she were a part of him.

"Oh, sir, thank Heaven, you have saved me!"

She spoke with gratitude and agitation, and then she—collapsed—there is no other word for it—and Tom had to let go of the horse, to have his hands free to catch her. She had fainted—apparently.

Certainly! I'll admit all you say. I'll go further, and say that if it had been Sergeant Heinrich Heimbach (now standing ten feet off, grinning at the captain) who had caught the horse the chances are nine out of ten that she would not have fainted. The sergeant was not a handsome man, either as to face or figure. He was pronounced in the region of the abdomen—very much too pronounced, and his face was not a fascinating one. It

justified Nat, in part, at least, who invariably referred to him as "that bottle-nosed Dutchman." We have seen that Nat had a strange prejudice against anybody who hailed from either Germany or Holland—two countries which were but one on his map. But Tom was a very different looking fellow, as we know. And when he turned his bright, handsome face up, so that the moonlight deepened a little bit the young mustache which shaded his lip while it gave his eyes a glorious softness and brilliancy—well? what could the young woman do? What could any healthy, well-regulated young woman do?

Then, remember, she had just escaped from a band of cutthroats who had been shooting at her, if the senses were to be believed. She was entirely right!

Certainly Tom didn't stop to question the propriety of the young woman's procedure, as he clasped the little waist with his arms and looked down into the pale face that lay on his shoulder. On the contrary he felt a most peculiar thrill pass through all of his nerves; not an unpleasant, but an utterly unaccustomed sort of a shock. The perfectly oval face was pale and yet of a pallor just a little lighter than the color of your grandmother's old ivory spool case. The hair was black and shone lustrous in the moonlight. The hat had fallen back and showed the low, sweet brow—and he gazed fascinated upon it.

Have a care, Tom! It is certain that the Serpent of the Nile conquered with just such a brow.

And then, the eyes being closed, long, black lashes shining like silk lay upon the cheek, and upon the lip there was the faintest suggestion of a mustache—not too much—if the lips beneath *were* a shade too full and pouting showing their lovely scarlet above the dainty chin—just as if their owner were not in a dead faint. Tom had time to see all this, and more, for he noted the curve of the eyebrows and the perfection of the nose, which was not as straight as a ruled line, or it would have been imperfect, before the firing from the cedar clump began.

"Here, sergeant, take this girl! Lay her down on the bank there and sprinkle some water from your canteen in her face!" and he was gone, eager as a foxhound, with his men up the slope.

As the sergeant took hold of the young woman, which he did very reluctantly to say truth, and with an expression of countenance which did not add to the beauty with which nature had endowed him, the long black lashes were raised a little way and the eyes beneath stole a glance at the "second relief," as one may say, and then—well, then the young woman recovered at once! And before the sergeant could sprinkle the water in his canteen in her face she had quietly walked to the roadside and seated herself on the bank.

"Thank you; I am better now!"

And that was fortunate for the water in Sergeant Heimbach's canteen was stale beer, and not much of that!

Tom was speedily back. He left off the chase much sooner than those who knew him well might have thought he would; but then you can't pursue cavalry with infantry! Besides he was at every step getting farther and farther away from camp and going in the direction where it was known that Bragg had a large army—how large no one knew. He might indeed fall into a trap. You can't chase cavalry with infantry I repeat, and a cautious commander won't run his men into an unknown country which may be filled with the enemy; and there is no good reason to suppose that Tom's speedy return was at all hastened by the knowledge that there was a lovely young girl waiting for him, perhaps still in a dead faint.

She was, however, sitting on the bank, with Sergeant Heinbach mounting guard over her as if she were a box of hard bread or a bag of coffee. She had apparently recovered her composure—at least so far as it might be expected that a young girl, so recently in such grave peril, could recover in such a short length of time—her hat was restored to its proper place and her dress was as smooth and tidy as if she had just attired herself for a pleasure ride with her sweetheart.

"How do you feel now?"

Tom didn't know exactly how to open up a conversation, but thought this would do as well as anything.

"Oh, thank you, I'm ever so much better! And how grateful I am to you for rescuing me from those dreadful men! I can never repay you!"

Doubtless Tom had by this time in his life grown a little bit conceited over his personal appearance. He was entitled to feel pretty well satisfied with himself on that score, not only because he was really a handsome fellow but because he was of the proper age to entertain such feelings. At all events it was well that the hat brim shaded the young woman's eyes so that he could not see how much of admiration for him they were filled with. He had enough to do to keep his face from telling tales of the influence of her voice which vibrated through and through his sensitive nature, making new music besides its own tones like the zephyr playing on the strings of the harp. And when she rose as he approached and came near to lay her hand upon his arm in the warmth of her gratitude, he thought it was very absurd and provokingly uncalled for that his whole being should be so filled with thrills and tremors, ecstatic as they unquestionably were.

"Oh, that's all right," he replied awkwardly. "Don't say a word." He didn't mean that.

"But I must! I am afraid you dared a great danger to come out and drive those awful men away for me."

And she shuddered as she thought of it.

"Why—why, I didn't do it for you. I mean—of course I would have done it all the same if I had known you were here. But you see I didn't. I heard the row, and I came out to see what it was. But I'm glad if I've been of service to you."

"Oh, sir, you have saved my life. You have saved me from death—perhaps something more dreadful than that, even," she continued, in a lower tone. "I cannot reward you—I never could—but Heaven certainly will."

"That's all right"—and Tom was glad that her horse came up at that moment, for he felt himself growing more and more awkward every second.

"Here's your horse. Shall I help you?"

"If you please."

Was there ever a daintier, prettier little foot in the world than the one Tom held in his hand for an instant while the young lady sprang into her saddle?

As the little party pursued the way back toward Nash-

ville, Tom's hand on the horse's bit, the men, still deployed and watchful, following on behind, the girl told her story briefly; and as Tom listened his soul seemed to drink in an intoxication such as one inhales at the first dawn of sunrise when the breeze comes fresh, dewy and odorous from the grass and flowers, and the birds begin to sing with a sweetness that they never achieve at any other hour of the twenty-four.

Her name was Ethel Lynde, she said. Her family were Unionists living in the mountains near Sparta. She had been home from the boarding-school at Huntsville but a short time. The Secessionists had persecuted her family—even to the death of some of them. She had stayed there till one dreadful night when men came and dragged her father from his bed to imprison him. Her mother had been dead for some years—her only surviving brother had escaped and she thought he had joined the Union army. She had no one to help or advise her. So she had saddled Selim with her own hands and in three days he had borne her, stanchly and safely, by the devious course she had to take to reach Nashville. She owed her life to brave old Selim—and it seemed as if the noble horse understood what she said, for he arched his slender neck and tossed his head and stepped more proudly as she talked. She had ridden around Murfreesboro where Bragg lay with his soldiers, and while she had had many narrow escapes she thought she had been in no real danger till that evening, when a band of rebels had followed her from Franklin, and would have caught her but for the brave and chivalric soldier who had come to her rescue. She had friends in Nashville; good Union people with whom she knew she would find a home.

Nat had built a bright fire in front of the rude shelter, a "lean-to" built of cedar branches, back to the picket line and face to the city, which had been erected there for the comfort of the picket guards, and the new recruit was soon made cozy with a cup of hot coffee and such portions of a soldier's fare as seemed worthy to be offered to a woman. While she was eating Nat observed that Tom's left hand presented a peculiar appearance. Snatching it he held it toward the light of the fire. It was covered with blood!

"My God, captain, you're wounded! Why didn't you tell us?"

"I guess not," replied Tom. "Maybe I was hit—but I didn't feel it. I *am* a little faint, Nat."

The young girl turned ghastly pale—and it was well that Nat was quick of eye and arm.

"Here, faint in *my* arms, miss! Don't you see that one of his is wounded?"

It was pleasant, after his moment of trance-like oblivion to lie at the young girl's feet and listen to her voice as she talked, and finally, at daybreak to escort her to her friends in the city; for his wound was a trifling one.

Later in the day, while lying in his quarters smoking his pipe it suddenly occurred to Tom with a sensation of surprise that he had not once thought of Margaret Henderson from the moment that he first heard the horse's hoofs the night before up to that hour! Even in his moment of half-oblivion it wasn't *her* face he saw before him!

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMING AND GOING OF FACES.

BUT it was Margaret Henderson's face which first filled his mind's eye when Tom waked the next morning from a sound, healthy sleep which was in noway disturbed by the slight scratch he had got in his arm. And as he lay there, wrapped in a sort of luxurious languor, half-awake and half-asleep, when the things of the world seemed all favorable and pleasurable, he was sometime in coming to the conclusion, which he finally reached however, that Margaret's features were not so clear nor sharply defined so to speak, as usual. Whereat he mentally rubbed that mental eye and looked again and with a greater concentration of his powers, but with no better result. Still the face seemed dim and indistinct—provokingly so. Something was the matter, and whatever it was it must be set right.

Ah! The effort to set it right only aroused him more fully; and as he became wider awake Margaret's pale face with its blue eyes and encircling crown of golden hair was totally obscured by another face of another pallor, with darker eyes with silken lashes and encircled by a crown of lustrous black hair. This new face flashed into Tom's mental vision as the sun flashes into the heavens in the morning; and then the old face could not be seen even after the most careful searching, any more than the moon can be seen when the full grandeur of the newly risen orb of day has filled all the sky and is flooding the secret places of the hills and valleys below with a heated ardor which drinks up the dewdrops before they have had time to shoot more than one brief, prismatic ray.

And then Tom was wide awake, and fully conscious of

everything of import to himself in the world; and had no longer any excuse to lie abed, save that by doing so he was enabled to reflect upon this new combination in his affairs, much more satisfactorily than if he had been out in the company street where he ought to have been some time ago, looking after the routine affairs of his company like a good captain and a model soldier.

It would be difficult to analyze and give a minute account of Tom's reflections just then. Remember, he was in most respects more of a man than a boy and yet in many respects besides his age he was much more of a boy than a man. That there was a struggle between a new and overwhelming passion which had suddenly got hold upon him, and a strongly assertive feeling of loyalty to the only other passion of the tender sort he had ever known; a struggle in which this loyalty which was so creditable to him was set upon and beaten about, and hustled and worried and whirled breathlessly by the new passion, and treated with no sort of respect nor consideration any more than if it was the ghost of a dead love which had possessed Tom in a previous state of existence when his soul inhabited the body of a holy Hindoo living in the shadow of a Buddhist temple as likely as not; that he reproached himself at one moment with great acerbity and bitterness for a fickleness which he was still unwilling to own to; and that at the same time he found it pleasant to plunge from these chilly breezes headlong into the warm crystal waves of the new passion which lapped the pebbles at his feet with a music that was more enticing than that which lured stern old Ulysses and gave no warning of the white bones that lay on the nether side of its seductiveness; that he tried to assert himself, and denounced himself and yet *would* turn for one more look into the eyes that were so soft and yet shot such sharp unerring arrows straight into his heart; that he tugged at these shafts and sought to draw them out, and laughed to see that he could not, loving so much their thrilling sting—and that at last he rose and gave it up and went to the mess tent for his breakfast very much put out with himself, not having lived long enough to have learned the handy dodge of taking fate

into consideration and throwing everything on to the broad shoulders of that stout old party—that all this took place and Tom was much discomposed by it, I am free as his biographer in a small way, to pledge to the reader, who will perhaps be glad to let it go at that and not ask for anything more.

He had heard nothing from her since he left her at the house of her friends the previous morning; nor had he mentioned her to any one after he had made his report to Lieutenant-Colonel Miles Bancroft, who, recovered from his wounds and now upon the general staff, was acting as provost-marshal of the city and whose business it was, as such, to take cognizance of and find out all about the new arrivals, and especially those who came in under such peculiar circumstances. He had not used many words in making his report to Colonel Bancroft, simply describing the little brush and telling where he had left "the girl," in the city. (Ethel had timidly asked his name and regiment. She, naturally, wanted to know who and what her preserver was; and Tom had written his address down upon a leaf torn from an old memorandum book and given it to her.) Doubtless Miles had called on her and, no one could tell, might have found her a most dangerous person, and perhaps had sent her to prison. The air was full of all sorts of romantic stories about lovely young women who were serving the Confederacy as spies and she might be one. No one could tell, because no one knew so far as Tom's information went. Still, when he recalled—recalled? nonsense! when he looked with his mind's eye at the little girlish figure, and the deep, dark eyes, and not so intently at the scarlet lips a trifle overfull, he could not find it in his heart to think she was anything but what she said she was.

Still, this is a queer world, or Tom thought it was at that time, and no one could tell.

So, when after breakfast he loaded up his briar-wood pipe with some genuine killikinick which he had stumbled upon a few days before, he sent for his orderly-sergeant and told him to have the company "fall in"—he would give them an hour's drill by way of warming

them up. And then he stood at his tent door idly watching the men as they came slowly forth, buckling their belts, or giving their guns one more rub with a piece of oiled flannel or grumbling in an undertone that they were trotted out so soon after breakfast. How did they know, how could they divine the fact that Tom hoped by a little brisk exercise to get his love affairs into a more satisfactory shape—that in point of fact he considered the conjunction of Mars with Venus at that particular moment as a piece of good fortune, and that by worshipping at the shrine of Mars for a little while he hoped he would be able to give Venus the go-by? And would they have grumbled any the less if they had known all this?

He was just thinking to himself "Well, after all, why not?" For he had not seen Margaret Henderson since the April day when he and Miles bade her farewell together, and he had no reason to believe that she thought anything of him more than she would think of almost any well-conditioned young patriot of her acquaintance who was making a target of himself in order that the Union might be preserved. He had written to her three or four times—and had received a dozen letters from her; but the fact is that just before the battle of Bull Run he had written her with an unmistakable warmth and had received a reply so sisterly, so altogether and confidently sisterly in its tone, that he had sworn he would never write her again, nor see her any more, till he could present himself to her in such growth of physical manhood and crowned with such guerdon of brave and manly deeds that she would not dare to attempt to treat his passion as a mere boy's whim—that she would be compelled to listen to him and answer him with respect and candor. He had broken over this rule once or twice by writing her such letters as any one might write to a young lady friend, but he refused to go back to Clayton when the others did at muster out, and remained at Camp Chase till the regiment was reorganized, putting in the time in drilling raw recruits for which work he was in great demand. Miles had gone home with a glorious wound—and had rejoined the army in his new position a very blithe and well-contented man; but that

might have been because he had been made a lieutenant-colonel; and up to this time Tom had contented himself that that was the explanation of Miles' cheerful serenity. Still, how could he tell what might have happened between Margaret and Miles while he was away? Miles had never spoken to him of Margaret since the day of the battle of Bull Run.

Somehow, these points in the case had never seemed so clear to Tom before, nor so weighty and worthy of consideration.

He was just thinking "Why not?" when his big lieutenant came up.

"Are you going to drill the company yourself?" asked Nat.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm sorry. You'd better let me take them out."

"Why? What's the matter?"

"Well—you've got a wound——"

"Oh, pshaw! You know that don't amount to anything."

"Still, I don't think you've got any call to go gallivanting around taking risks. You might take cold."

"You must be crazy."

"No, I'm not. I——"

"Oh, well, come; you overgrown elephant, you; what is it? Don't beat about the bush. Give me your true reason!"

The orderly-sergeant approached with his hand to his cap.

"The company is formed, captain."

"Very well, I'll——"

"Kin any of you gemmens tell me whar I kin find Cappen Bailey?"

It was a very black and very ragged and very bright-looking old darky, with a small parcel rolled up in a scrap of newspaper in his hand.

"Well," drawled Nat. "We might—for money. Money's a cash article, old charcoal, and business is business. How much will you give?"

"Deed, sah, I can't give nuffin! Yah! Yah! You'se

makin' spote of me, sah! I'se nuffin' but a ole niggah, sah! I'se got a note foh Captain Bailey, sah, from a lady!"

"Ah!"

"I'm Captain Bailey," said Tom.

"Yes, sah; yes, sah! Thar it is, sah!"

And he unfolded the piece of newspaper, as if the inclosure was the most precious thing in the world. He took the minutest nip on the corner of the envelope that was possible with his great, broad, horny thumb and forefinger, and throwing off his hat with a flourish and a bow he handed the missive to Tom.

"Yes, sah, yes, sah! De young lady tole me to give it to Capten Bailey hissef, sah!"

"The *young* lady?" queried Nat as he seated himself on a campstool and bent a quizzical look upon the darky. "A *young* lady? Pretty?"

"De Lawd didn't never make no purtier lady sence Adam war a leetle boy!" answered the black, with round emphasis.

"Humph!" said Nat, looking at Tom.

The boy, strangely enough, was irresolute; he scarcely knew whether to take the note or not. Indeed, so far, he had made no move to take it, and the darky did not seem to insist that he should.

Nat enjoyed Tom's betrayal of himself, while he was by no means aware of the facts in the case. He had attached but little importance to the advent of Miss Ethel upon the boards where our characters are playing their small parts, and had so far forgotten the matter that he did not connect the note nor Tom's evident embarrassment with the dark-eyed girl who galloped into the picket-post by moonlight to an accompanient of gun firing and the whistling of bullets. He simply saw that Tom was off his balance for once in a way and he enjoyed the hot blush that disfigured the boy's face and stained his temples to the roots of his hair. The poor goose! He had lived so intensely during the past twenty-five or thirty hours that it seemed to him as if the whole world must know of his secret. He thought the air was full of it. So he stood like an idiot, for a moment, over-

whelmed as if the winds were blabbing everything—including his gigantic disloyalty to a girl from whom he had never had a love word or token!

"Yes, sah! De lady didn't gimme nuffin' sah! Hits de custom in dishyer country foh de gemman to 'ward de messenger, sah!"

"This acursed thirst for gain!" groaned Nat, as if to himself. "This awful hungering for wealth! How it lays its blighting power upon all. Even a bright and beautiful being like this, whose unpolluted soul, one would think, was incapable of such a thing! Great Julius Cæsar's wife's grandmother!" he exclaimed with such sudden and startling vehemence that the darky recoiled from him in dismay. "It is awful! But at the same time I didn't think it was in me to get them words out so manganiferously! Don't give him a cent, captain. Not only because base is the slave who pays, you know, but because you owe it to him to preserve him from the fate that rushes upon him! Hey, there, you misguided cause of the war, what's your name?"

"Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy, sah!" Tremblingly.

"Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy? Well, now; that's a right smart chance of a name, ain't it? Reckon that after your parents gave you that name they felt free to divide the balance of the family assets among the rest of the children, didn't they? Phoebe Ann! what a name to fill the sounding trump of——"

"You is mistaken, sah! My fadder an' mudder didn't gimme da name, sah! Gin'rl Hardin' he done gimme dat name, sah! He's de ole marster an' he's pow'ful rich man, sah, he is!"

"Liberal old cuss when it comes to namin' nigger babies, anyhow! What do they call you for short?"

"'Curg, sah!"

"Well, that's better if a fellow hasn't got all day before him. Now, 'Curg, have you ever reflected—don't touch it, captain, don't touch it," cried Nat with affected concern as Tom handed 'Curg a shinplaster and reached for the letter. "Don't touch it, I say! Its hoodoo! Its hoodoo!"

'Curg's knees smote together, his jaw fell, and his eyes

filled with terror were fastened on Nat's face while in his fright he dropped the note on the ground.

"Yes, sir, it's hoodoo! It's hoodoo! And this trembling wretch here, this double-dyed incarnation of midnight darkness, this old he-scoundrel with the manganiferous name, he's a hoodoo, too! I see it in his eye!"

"Fore God, massa cunnel I——"

"Do you pretend to tell me that you're not a hoodoo?"

"Fore God, I isn't!"

"Do you mean to say that you're not a hoodoo, and what's worse a Baptist hoodoo?"

"Deed I isn't! I'se a Baptiz—but I ain't no hoodoo! I didn't know de note was hoodoo—'deed I didn't! I'se nuffin' but a pore ole niggah, sah, an' I doan mean no hahm to nobody! 'Deed I don't!"

Meantime Tom had secured his message and gone within his tent to read it.

"Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy," said Nat, changing his tone to one of business negotiation. "Can you cook, and wash dishes?"

"Deed I kin!"

"Can you black boots and brush clothes?"

"Deed I kin!"

"Can you shave a fellow?"

"Yes, sah!"

"Can you make pies?"

"Yes, sah!"

"Out of nothing?"

"Yes—no, sah!"

"Are you a liar?"

"Deed I isn't, massa gin'r'l! 'Fore——"

"Can you take care of horses?"

"Yes, sah!"

"Would you like to go with the sogers?"

"Deed I would!"

"Do you like to fight?"

"No—no, sah!"

"Are you fond of wading in gore and carnage up to your eyebrows, and do you like to drink hot blood and sigh for more?"

"Oh, no—massa gin'r'l, 'deed I don't!"

"Are you fond of stalking godlike in the awful hell of battle?"

"I'd die first!"

"What? Don't your blood leap and thrill in your veins when you are summoned forth to scenes of slaughter?"

"No, dey don't—'deed dey don't!"

"Do you think it's 'sweet for your country to die?' "

"Gin'r'l, gin'r'l, hits sweeter to live!"

"You're head's as level as a board! Where do you hide things when you steal 'em?"

"Oh, gin'r'l, I don't never steal!"

"But you can steal if you want to, can't you? There's no constitutional infirmity about you to keep you from stealing if you want to, is there?"

"Oh, gin'r'l, I can't steal!"

"What? Do you mean to tell me that if you saw Captain Bailey and Jigadier-Brindle Kellogg (that's me) fainting and weak from hunger after a long march, our noble spirits drooping after an excessive waste of patriotic ardor over muddy roads and plowed fields in a hard rain—do you mean to say that under such circumstances as those you would hesitate about stealing a chicken or so or even a paltry pig or sheep wherewith to stay our warlike stomachs and build up and refresh our heroic natures? Pause, Xerxes! Pause, Lycurgus! Ponder and reflect, old man McCurdy, for upon your answer may depend the outcome of this internecine struggle!"

"Oh, but dat's diffrunt!" cried 'Curg, grinning. "Datch-yers diffrunt! Why, o' cose, o' cose under dem yer suckumstances——"

"You *could* steal, eh?"

"'Cose I could—'cose I could!"

"Then that settles it! Get in there and go to work. You are cook and valet and chambermaid and liar and barber and thief for the officer's mess of Company 'Q.' "

"Yes, sah!"

"But there's one thing I want to caution you about. You said you was a Baptist?"

"Yes, sah!"

"There's where I want to caution you! It's all right

when you're washing shirts or performing your own personal ablutions, you bright and beautiful being! On such occasions let 'er come! Be a Baptist till you can't rest, then! But when it comes to making coffee and bean soup, my boy, be cautious! Don't at such times allow your religious prejudices to lead you too far! Water's a good thing—but there are times when you *can* get too much of a good thing, and I tell you—no matter what you may have been taught by the gifted men who have pointed out the damp and heavenly way for you, I tell you that when it comes to coffee and bean soup there's mighty little saving grace in a superabundance of water! D'ye see?"

"I onderstau', sah!"

"'Tis well, then! Go to your work—and when you steal be discriminating! Wear your rue with a difference! Don't ever steal from the officer's mess of Company 'Q.' We had a noble youth filling the high and responsible position to which you have just been called. He cooked be-youtifully! He was perfect but for one thing. He lacked discrimination about stealing. We were grieved of course when he stole sugar from the colonel's mess, and were saddened when he got away with the doctor's whisky, but we bore up under it; and when we drank the resultant punch we seemed somehow to gather consolation and hope! We could not condemn him utterly for that one venial fault. But when he forgot to discriminate and begun to steal from *us*, we felt that the time for action had come. We—but do you see those buzzards slowly circling through the circumambient atmosphere?"

"Yes, sah!" with awe, inspired by Nat's big words and pompous delivery.

"They have risen from an awful feast!"

"Good Lawd!"

"Beneath the shadow of their obscene wings lie bleaching the bones of—but I will spare you and myself! Brindle into that kitchen and get to work!"

But Mr. McCurdy hesitated. A moment ago he was eager to embrace the new avocation that presented itself; but now—now his mind was filled with vague and horri-

ble possibilities. The path into which he was so anxious to spring, had suddenly lost its brightness. He would save himself before it was too late.

"'Deed I'd love to, Massa gin'r'l; but I can't! 'Deed I can't."

"Why not?"

"'Case I 'longs to Gin'r'l Hardin', sah."

"I don't care who you belong to. You're a free nigger now. Go ahead!"

"But Gin'r'l Hardin' he prizes mé, he does!"

"All right—if he wants you he can come and get you—if he can! Don't you understand? You're a free nigger, now!"

"Free?"

"Yes, free. I'll see to that!"

The darky's eyes dilated. He was about to speak when Tom came out of the tent.

"You can drill the company, Nat. I'm going into the city!"

'Curg retired to the tent that was used for a kitchen whence soon came the sounds of rattling pots and pans above which rose the darky's voice, singing in a wild, quaint, uncouth but sadly sweet melody:

"I'se free! I'se free!

Washed in the blood of the Lamb!"

Nat's voice was heard down in the company street—no drawl now—giving sharp, peremptory orders, and Tom lifting the tent flap passed within. Taking off his sword he threw himself upon his cot to read again his missive. It was written in the cultivated hand of an educated woman—the great, slender, sprawling, angular characters that had, before that day, set men's hearts to beating—the hearts of men who were older and wiser than Tom.

"CAPTAIN THOMAS BAILEY,

"Twenty-first Ohio Regiment:

"Does it seem indelicate that the little girl whom you rescued from such an awful fate, should wish to see and thank her preserver once more, or presumptuous that she should write to him to solicit him to call upon her that she may have the opportunity to do so? I sin-

cerely hope not. For I do not wish to overstep the bounds of maidenly modesty and proper decorum, and yet I feel that I must see you once more. It is said that you will soon go to Murfreesboro to fight General Bragg. When I think of what may happen then, that I may never see you again, I feel that I need no other excuse for thus addressing you. Besides, I am very lonely here.

“Sincerely and gratefully,

“ETHEL LYNDE.”

Be it remembered, that Captain Thomas Bailey, although he had won much renown already as a fighter, was still but a lad of nineteen. It makes no difference what the effect of such a note received under such circumstances would have been upon you. Perhaps it had quite a different effect upon Tom. At all events he spent half an hour in reading and rereading it.

Then he made a discovery; the which he mentally contemplated for at least ten minutes, with a great deal of pleasure and inward satisfaction, namely, that if he had thought that he loved Margaret he had never told her so, and thus was free from the imputation of disloyalty. Then he put the note away, very carefully, in the inside pocket of his waistcoat, on the left side. And the simple fact of its presence there increased his feeling of satisfaction; at least he chose to assume that it did; which amounted to the same thing.

Then he buttoned his coat up to his chin, and started off to the city. Just as he left the camp he heard Nat cry out to the company on the parade ground, “Great Julius Cæsar! The Home Guards would do better than that!” and he smiled to think how the boys would squirm under the rebuke—the severest that could possibly have been employed.

CHAPTER XIV.

SETTING THE BATTLE FRONT.

THE column moved slowly and cautiously, with frequent halts and long tedious waits, occasioned by the general sending back word every little while that everything must be kept in instant readiness for going into action "as the enemy are evidently advancing *en masse*."

The pike was filled as far back as the eye could reach with infantry and artillery, and wagons loaded with camp equipage, rations and armunition, all moving slowly for perhaps fifteen minutes out of every sixty and waiting wearily for the other forty-five. On the flanks occasional glimpses could be had of cavalry dashing here and there, and once in awhile the muffled sound of musketry firing by small squads could be heard. Much less often the cottony boom of a piece of artillery would fall upon the ear—the sound gathering softness as it traversed the miles from where the gun spit out its spiteful flames and ringing roar. Once in awhile the troops would be summoned to throw down a fence and tramp for a mile or two in hot haste in soft, moist soil, through thick woods and over the brown slopes; and then, having got no one knew where, they would retrace their steps with much grumbling and swearing back to the 'pike; or perhaps would take up a new position in a "dirt road," where the men could boil coffee and exchange jokes with the peculiar persons who drove mule-teams—a class *sui generis*, unquestionably.

During a prolonged halt, a rather heavy firing going on the while at the front on the extreme left, a regiment of cavalry came pounding and clinking up from the rear. The road ran for some distance through a cut, and as it was

filled with troops and cannon and wagons, the horsemen galloped and trotted along through the adjacent field. In the cut the men had gathered in groups; some around small fires on which they were boiling coffee and before which they broiled their strips of bacon on the end of long sticks or the steel rammers of their muskets—and the air was full of the sharp, delicate odor of cedar rails burning; some stood erect in the road as if expecting momentarily the order to fall in and double-quick to the scene of the firing; others, with their knapsacks under their heads lay on their broad backs regardless of the dampness of the ground, smoking their pipes thoughtfully; a few having climbed to the top of the cut indulged in sarcastic comments on the "creeter company" in which the ungraceful rider was asked "Why don't ye git a string and tie yerself on, sonny?" and the swaggering, dashing, valiant fellow was told of the standing reward offered for the man who had ever laid eyes on a dead cavalryman, or a defunct mule; to which the horsemen, you may be sure, were not slow to give reply in kind.

Given, six mules to a wagon, hitched together more or less closely and with a competent driver—competent to drive mules, mind you—and you have a variety of talent in a small space, such as may not easily be equalled under other circumstances.

For an hour perhaps, the six long-eared creatures would stand quietly like so many philosophers, statuesque and serene, while the gifted being who guided their destinies for thirteen dollars a month, rations and clothing, slumbered peacefully by the roadside upon a saddle-blanket, or exchanged refined amenities with his fellow-drivers over a pipe, a surreptitious canteen of commissary whisky or a game of cards. Then all at once Satan would enter into the mules to try conclusions with his usually more than peer, the driver. Each several and distinct mule, fully impressed that his great patron and exemplar from below had honored him with his sole and exclusive company, would testify his appreciation of the additional mulishness thus acquired by kickings and squallings and hee-haws, which to the uninitiated would

seem to have their spring in nothing at all under the sun. In course of time unutterable exaltation to the mules would be attained—this happening when they had involved themselves in an inextricable snarl, with perhaps one or two of their number prone in the mud. That they esteemed this state of things to be blissful could easily be told by the expression with which they eyed the gifted being as he approached to untangle them.

Then the soft and gentle breezes would bear upon their odorous wings fragments of strange and strong and concentrated remarks, as the teamster communed with himself upon the topic most readily suggestive; in time, it were safe to say, if a breeze of sufficient body to bear the weight came booming along, a volume of straight, clear and resonant profanity would go roaring and swelling down the pike—in its symmetrical and well sustained and almost artistic proportions as far above the broken ejaculatory character of the opening observations of the teamster as the roar of a *corps d'armè* fully engaged with the enemy is superior to the spatting and cracking of muskets in a skirmish at a picket post.

In other branches of high art "some are born great, some achieve greatness and others have greatness thrust upon them." In this particular branch—the driving of army mules—the successful man is born great. No training will suffice to make him competent; though the zeal of madness fill his soul he cannot reach perfection; and sooner or later the pitying, patronizing admonition of the noble being predestined to the work, "You have mistaken your avocation! You hain't got the hang of the language and never will git it! Your blood hain't rich enough! You were born for to be a chaplain!" bitter and stinging as it is at first, must come to be accepted; and the too-daring aspirant must yield to a fate which molds him with its iron hands and sink to his place among men of common clay.

But there are degrees of excellence even among those who are born great; and as the regiment of cavalry passed by, the acknowledged first artist in the brigade sat smoking, solitary, as became his rank, on the bank beside

his team. When Satan came seeking mules to amuse, he took the team in front—whether he felt and acknowledged the champion's superiority or not, is not material. The usual kicking and squealing and hee-hawing resulted in the overthrow of a small but particularly tough old mule, with an entanglement of harness that was not at first apparent in all its diabolical perfection to the half-awakened driver, suddenly aroused by the noise. The champion, long, thin, dark, hook-nosed and small-eyed, sat beneath his great, broad-brimmed wool-hat, smoking and calmly watching and listening.

Patiently, and with manly self-restraint the forward driver strove to release his fallen mule. Only occasionally did he pause to give expression to his feelings; and then he did it in a half-finished way, like a man who felt that the job was not so gigantic after all—not one which demanded that he should put forth more than a part of his vast energies. And the mule lay quietly. It was a matter not vitally important to him—at least as yet. His companions drooped their heads and seemed half-asleep; also unconcerned and placid to the hasty observer. It was only when the twinkle in their half-shut eyes betrayed them that one could be brought to believe that they were not asleep indeed.

The driver stayed his hand, and sat him down while he spoke in tones of—well, say hopeful sadness. Then he remained silent for a moment.

Then he went at his work again with renewed determination and fresh cheerfulness. And his determination deepened and grew fiercer in its demonstration minute by minute, while his cheerfulness melted gradually away like the fleecy cloud on a blue, summer sky.

Then he rested again—but not so calmly as before. He wiped the perspiration from his brow with the back of his hand, while he gazed with steadfast eye upon the tranquil mule. There was a dark threatening in his eye, and—and the mule knew it. I don't know how he knew it—but he did; and he remained only more, and more provokingly, tranquil.

The struggle recommenced—the struggle of the noble reasoning man with the perverse and twisted, insensate

and obstinate gearing. At last a ray of light appeared! A buckle loosened here—a chain untwisted there, a lift and a pull, a groan and an improper remark in a suppressed tone, and, aha! victory is at hand!

This was the moment the mule had waited for so tranquilly. The time had come, and with a frantic wriggling, well calculated to deceive (as it seemed like an effort to get his fore-feet under him so that he might rise), he brought his great hammer head with all the force of his tough old neck straight up and into the eye and cheek bone of the buoyant being bending over him and hurled him back, shrieking and writhing with pain.

Ah! then was displayed the resources of a mule-driver's soul! Then came a revelation of a vocabulary such as would have paralyzed the enthusiasm of the father of all the lexicographers! Then he that spoke the English language with pride in its variety and elasticity might well felicitate himself upon a new discovery of richness and fecundity theretofore undreamed of!

The bright and gifted ones in charge of adjacent teams gathered and stood about in proud envy as they listened to the comrade who, with his hand to his eye writhed and stamped upon the ground, and bent his body and foamed at the mouth with an utterance of novel and unparalleled magnificence. And glances were cast at the great champion himself, as if to ask whether he realized that his own hitherto unchallenged supremacy was threatened.

But that superior person smoked on imperturbably, calmly regarding the suffering and struggling man with the air of a fair but experienced and thoroughly competent critic. At last as the paroxysms subsided and the hazy blue of the atmosphere cleared away a little, he removed his pipe and quietly said, as who should pronounce an impartial and yet discriminating verdict:

"Them words, Jeems, is all right, in fact be-you-tiful! But the tone," as with a shake of the head he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and rose to saunter away, "the tone of voice is a—*le-e-elle* too low!"

And the pain of the bruised one was not alleviated but added to by the consciousness that spite of his splendid

spurt he had not even succeeded in collaring the champion. And his comrades, round about, who had listened and looked with such interest, turned them one and all carelessly away and left him as men always leave the unsuccessful one, without pity or sympathy.

And the mule? Was he radiant?

Your question shows that you are all acquainted with mule character. The mule weak enough to show a sign of gratification at such a time were unworthy of his ears.

In his attitude and expression the mule gave evidence of the possession of powers of self-repression and self-restraint such as the most polished man of the world might envy. It was the refinement of high art. Every line in his pose, the humble droop to the tail, the half-closed eye, the sad, abstracted expression of his face, even the careless half-negligé of the disarrangement of his ears—every one of these things was a study!

He was as meek as Moses.

For two days, namely the 26th and 27th of December, the story was the same.

Weary delays beneath a leaden sky, under orders which contemplated such exigence of heavy work with the enemy circling fiercely and vigilantly around that no attempt to take comfort could be made; sudden and hot rushes through and over a country that was soft and muddy where it was not rocky and tangled—sorties that might have been better borne if they had resulted in anything more satisfactory than a harmless volley at the tails of a scurrying and disappearing handful of butternut-clothed horsemen—longer waitings in the ankle-deep mud; and then hours of pulling and prying and tugging and shouting to release wagons or cannon from miry pits or to put them over precipices and stretches of jagged stone in the country roads so rough that even birds couldn't fly over them with any comfort. At night to halt, so late that selection of the better places to rest the body in was impossible, so that one was as likely to seek the semblance of comfort in a mudhole or on a ridge of outcropping rock as on a spot where the tough hide of a

rhinoceros would find nothing to object to; and to lie there without tent or shelter through the cold raw night sleeping with one eye open and a sense of utter insecurity. Happy the command encamped in a cornfield where the furrows afforded a bed out of which one could not well fall or roll; even if the furrow should become a raging torrent during the sweet and subtle mystery of the silent, brooding night!

Rain on Friday the 26th and rain on Saturday the 27th steadily pouring down, cold and penetrating and persistent, till the pikes became rivulets of gray water and the "dirt roads" became long channels of swimming mud, and the man who essayed to cross the open field lifted a ton of soil with every step; and rain again all day Sunday, when a halt was made out of respect for the day, and the soldiers instead of moving around drippingly were permitted to lie about and soak. Everything saturated; the crackers a pulp; the bacon slimy; coffee beans soft, swollen and spongy; sugar, very thin molasses, and salt a villainously weak brine; the woolen blankets absorbing a barrel of water each; the rubber blanket as cheerfully comforting as the cool moisture of a clinging snake; the whisky, even, revolting and sickening—because it tasted so strongly of water; shoes, contract shoes, God forgive them who made them for the poor fellows to wear—no; I don't mean that—I hope He won't forgive them!—shoes as spongy and porous and sodden as rotten basswood bark, and falling to pieces amid grim jests as to the mistake that was made in issuing them to infantry when they were clearly intended for cavalry; everything cold and wet and cheerless from the blue, shivering lips down to the cramped and benumbed toes—everything except the cartridges and the chambers and locks of the rifles and the jokes with which unsurpassed and patient heroism wiled the time away. There was not even excitement enough to warm the men up and keep down the infernal shivers that ran through the system like an ague chill.

Monday morning, however, showed better. That is, the fighting of the advance and on the flanks was more frequent and interesting and gave better promise of

warmer work for all. As the army neared Murfreesboro, moving cautiously and like a great troop of ghosts through the fog, the men involuntarily got nearer together and carried their pieces with a firmer grip and out of the wonderfully mysterious depths of man's divine and inexhaustible elasticity they gathered a strength that certainly neither nourishment nor comfort had given them. And Monday night found the whole army save the right wing, McCook's command, within three miles of Murfreesboro. The right wing, detained by fogs, and bad roads and a more persistent opposition from the enemy, was a few miles farther back to the right and rear.

Silently, and feeling their way with their hands, as it were, the troops found their alignment, and with but little discussion of what daylight might bring, laid them once more down, chilled and weary, to sleep. On Tuesday McCook came up, pushing from the right rear till his line, running in a southwesterly direction, was at almost right angles with the line of the center of the army, which faced more to the south; and the sound of his steadily advancing guns throughout the entire day was listened to almost enviously by the men of the left and center who might have fairly owned that they feared their comrades of the right wing would bear away all the honors of the campaign.

After all, McCook with his troops, almost constantly in motion and coming almost hourly in contact with the enemy, by which they were kept warm and active, had by far the easier task. Under the most favorable circumstances and meteorological conditions it is harder for brave men to stand inert while their companions near by are fighting than it is to fight. Then, there is nothing more wearing upon nerves, temper and courage itself than to be held with your enemy in full view, prepared for and anticipating battle at every moment, and yet to be restrained—with an occasional shot or two on the skirmish-line and once in awhile the sight of a wounded or dead man brought back from the front. At such times one has to contemplate the grimmest, coldest, harshest features of war, and to do it with calmly flowing

blood; and I know of nothing in the world that will test the manhood of a soldier like this. In the heat and noise and excitement of the actual conflict men are carried along on the full bosom of a sweeping and irresistible tide which sustains while it whirls them on; in the other case they breast a cold and deadly current which constantly weakens them and strives to suck them under.

When the men of the left and center lay down in the mud for such repose as they might be able to get, on the night of the 30th, they were not permitted to even strike a match, lest they should betray their position. Over on the right, however, where it was desired to deceive the enemy, fires were built away beyond the real flank.

And whatever may have been the theories and guesses and surmises and hopes and fears of the soldiers of the Army of the Cumberland up to that hour, speculation then came to an end; and every man, from the general in command down to the hook-nosed teamster, knew that daylight would bring with it an awful struggle—if indeed a night attack did not precipitate it sooner.

"It's my private opinion publicly expressed," said Nat to Tom that night, as they lay shivering, belted and booted as all were sleeping on their arms, of course; "it's my private opinion, publicly expressed, that if they don't cut old John F. loose to-morrow morning and let him fight, he'll sail out o' here on his own hook and give 'em a whirl just for luck!"

"Why? What's the matter with John F.?"

"Well, I've been keeping my eye on him all day, and I tell you he means business!"

"Of course he does. We all mean business. That's what we're here for. Did you think it was a picnic?"

"Not much! But John F. means business rather more than some other fellows around here I tell you."

"Well, that's all right. That's what we want."

"Have you seen him going up and down the lines to-day on that bay horse?"

"Yes, I've noticed him."

"That horse is a thoroughbred—and so's John F. They've been looking this thing over together to-day and

what they don't know about things acrund here ain't worth knowing. I tell you John F. can see with them eyes! He can see as far and as quick with them eyes as any man can with a fieldglass! And the horse—he don't have to look! All he's got to do is just to brindle around and when John F. sees anything why the horse sees it—knows it without seeing—they've got a fellow feeling, ye see—sort o' brothers!"

"Well, that's a compliment for John F.!"

"Of course it is! Why, I tell you there's more brotherhood—more relationship—kin—whatever you call it, between a good man and a good horse than there is between a good man and many a fellow I know of."

"Yes, I believe that too. But you don't think John F. would fight without orders, do you?"

"Oh, no! I was joking about that—I only meant that he is loaded and he's increasing the charge every minute. He's come down here to fight, you know, and he thinks he'll have a chance pretty soon, and it kind o' makes him hump himself around, ye see. No—I don't think he has any idea of fighting without orders, but if he has, why I'm his huckleberry—he can count on me every time!"

"Yes, somehow all the boys seem to have that same sort of faith in him."

"Faith in him? Of course they have! John F.'s all right! He don't have any velvet facings on his coat, nor his staff don't wear no white breeches on review, but he's business all the same!"

And Nat, slipping down a little so that the out-cropping rock which had been pressing his hip joint till it was bruised was adjusted into the soft place just above, where it fitted better, and putting his hand between his face and the canteen which served him for a pillow, fell asleep.

How long the night was, and yet how short! To those who watched, thinking till their brains grew hot and painful and striving to foresee what the morning, the dreadful to-morrow, would bring them, balancing all the chances and the probabilities with thoughts of wives

and children and their future in a certain awful contingency; to these the night which measured their suspense was long—drearily and wearily long.

Does any one know, save the man who leaves wife and children and puts their future comfort and well being in the scale along with his own life for his country, does any one else know what patriotism is? From hundreds and thousands of happy homes in this land went men to offer their lives for the preservation of the Union, men who loved their wives and their little ones as dearly as men could love; and they went, knowing that while they lived and the war lasted, their families, these dear ones, would be pinched and deprived upon their small wages; while if their lives were lost, suffering, such as would drive to madness to think of, would come to them. The fond and loving wife would be compelled to hardest toil, perhaps far beyond her strength, and find an early grave worn out in a struggle to maintain and educate the golden-haired girl and the brown-eyed boy whose pictures shone ever before the father's eyes. How could he tell? Might not they become outcasts and beggars before the time came that they could work and earn their own living?

In the man who went into the army without ties of this sort, or the man who knew that if he fell his loved ones were provided for, it was still a grand and noble and heroic thing! But what was it in the case of the hundreds of thousands who risked so much more than their own lives; but who never permitted themselves to measure the two duties—to imagine for a moment that loyalty to their country could perhaps be treason to their families? And what strength it must have taken to enable a warm-hearted loving husband and father to resist the temptation to believe that the claims of his dear ones came first! It is only when we make an estimate of this sort that we get at anything like the true value of this uprising which saved the Union and I believe blessed humanity as no other act of men ever did.

And how swiftly the hours flew by to those who stood to guard whilst others slept—hearing through all the night the sound within the enemy's lines of marching

feet and rumbling wheels and clanking sabers going steadily toward our right, and seeing through the foggy darkness figures of men, and groups flitting and looming here and there and striving to penetrate the secrets of our line and to find its weak places!

And how soon the dawn came to those who, worn with fatigue, slept in all their cheerless discomfort and dreamed of home, and kissed their children at their knees, and looked into the steadfast eyes of the loving wife more dear than any other being upon the earth; or walked adown the scented lane with the maiden of the starry eyes and flitting blush—how soon it came to these—that single shot which pierced the silence, and with its sharp echo rang the knell of ten thousand souls and in an instant woke a hell of crashing carnage!

CHAPTER XV.

THE THIRTY-FIRST OF DECEMBER, 1862.

THE men were moving about quietly, joking in low tones, scraping together the crumbs of soaked hardtack that made their morning meal, for they were not permitted on the left and along the center to make fires to cook anything; stretching themselves prone in the mire to drink out of puddles and then filling their canteens with the muddy, unwholesome liquid, which they foresaw would soon be worth more, drop for drop, than its weight in diamonds; rubbing up the locks of their guns and adjusting cartridge boxes, so that they might fight to the best possible advantage when the signal came—not at all insensible to the influences of the hour and the place, but mentally and physically girding themselves up for the encounter—swallowing their cold, nervous shivers with a feeling of shame that even the power of the great will which kept them steadfast could not suppress such unmanly, involuntary shuddering.

In the midst of this subdued hum there suddenly came a sound like that which is made when one breaks a stick across one's knee—snap!

That first shot!

You have heard in the sweet dewness of the fresh and odorous dawn the cheep of the earliest awakened bird and have observed that another at once follows and then another and another till suddenly the whole grove is filled with melody?

Well, it was like that; and yet, of course, it was not!

For that first shot, coming from the rifle of a vigilant sikrmisher who sought to check the intrusiveness of an overbold Confederate, had scarcely sounded before an-

other followed and then a third and yet another, till all along the miles of the front a fusillade rang out that brought the men up, standing, with compressed lips, quick-beating hearts and hard, deep breathing. . . .

General Bragg, commanding the Confederate Army during battle of Stone River, had that stream, with some insignificant earthworks some distance back, and but little else, to protect his right wing. On his left he had some fairly good intrenchments. He perhaps overestimated, for a careful commander, the value of the river as an obstacle to the advance of the Union left wing. It was not a serious obstacle—but that is neither here nor there. His plan of battle contemplated a fierce and heavy attack upon the right of the Union line and the annihilation of the Union Army, and circumstances not pleasant to remember greatly helped him and very nearly gave him complete success.

General Rosecrans, with a more correct judgment, made up his mind that Stone's River was but a feeble barrier to the advance of brave men; and as he knew that the Confederate left was tolerably well intrenched he, too, determined upon a plan of battle which contemplated the crushing of his adversary's right; this accomplished, the fall of Murfreesboro must follow.

And the two generals on Tuesday evening issued instructions almost precisely identical in spirit to their corps commanders. The commander of the right wing, in each case, was to keep up a bold and determined front; not to force the fighting, but to so bear himself as to persuade his opponent that he was, always, just on the point of doing so; and the commander of the left wing, in each case, was to fall upon his adversary with fury and persistence. . . .

The two brigades on the right of the Union line were at breakfast with hot coffee, their arms stacked and their battery horses unhitched and some of them led off to water. For this terrible mistake the commander of one of these brigades, Colonel Kirk, atoned with his life before sunset, fighting gallantly and with a valor than which no man ever showed greater. The other, bluff old August Willich, reputed natural son of the Emperor

William of Germany, in a vain attempt to retrieve his error fell into the enemy's hands and languished for some months in a Southern prison. If anything could have wiped out the blame which lay upon these commanders, their heroic fighting and that of their soldiers on this awful day would have sufficed. And let us hope that history will decide that it did.

Down upon these men, lulled into a feeling of false security by this carelessness of their commanders, came, swooping, Bragg's fighters, ten to one; the rebel left extending far beyond the Union right, and rushing in to envelop and crush it. Valor could not stem the onset; the courage of as noble and brave a band of men as ever felt in their veins the strength of Anglo-Saxon blood was of no avail; and though they sprang to arms like tigers upon their prey, and sought to align themselves, and fought with desperation, they were crushed in almost less time than it takes to write it and swept back upon their comrades further on the left, almost back to back with them.

At last the surge of the rebel advance was momentarily stayed. Changing front to rear with coolness and rapidity the fresh troops in the Union line offered a stubborn resistance. But they met and challenged an advance which they could not hold. For it was irresistible, and almost before their gun barrels were heated another brigade of men was flying back upon the line which stretched still farther to the left, where again a desperate struggle, but a hopeless one, ensued.

Remember that now it was not alone Bragg's ponderous flanking masses of men, coming from the rear, who had to be encountered and resisted. The whole front of the line was furiously engaged; so that when one shattered brigade after another was thrown back, the men in the line remaining steadfast and apparently with their hands full with the enemy in front, found themselves assailed from the flank and rear also and incumbered and embarrassed by thousands of their flying comrades. What were mortal men to do? They fought their enemy front and rear, to the right and left and then of course were compelled to yield, join and merge themselves with the dis-

organized mob and retreat still farther to the left, while the Confederate musketry and artillery poured volley after volley, shot, shell, grape and canister at short range into the mass, plowing through from side to side, striking down, killing and maiming as Indians slay bewildered buffalos.

All that could be done was done by Rosecrans to stem the swirling tide of disaster. His little force of cavalry was kept busy in the rear protecting the ammunition and supply trains from the attacks of the Wheelers and Morgans who with their reckless riders were infinitely troublesome; in moments of brief respite from these onsets they dashed now and again upon the rebel left flank to worry and distract attention; till they were called off again to look after matters in the rear, from Lavergne to Overall's Creek. The Union reserves thus thrown into the breach withered and passed away like a cloud of dry leaves sucked by the heat into a forest fire. And still the victorious Confederates, crazy, fierce, and relentless with joy at their tremendous success, came pouring on like tumbling waves on the storm-swept rocks, shrieking their peculiar war cry like so many possessed of devils.

The Union left, which it was planned should sweep like a whirlwind across the stream and into the town, had but just begun its movement when the roar of battle coming from the right so rapidly and so menacingly, like the noise of a consuming conflagration which cannot be stayed, gave it pause. It was seen that Bragg's plan was succeeding, and Rosecrans must change his. Then came orders swift and fast and all who could be seized upon were thrown into the maelstrom in the hope to choke and check it. The beaten troops were rallied and sent charging again and again into the fiery cloud that marked Bragg's steady advance. Flying batteries were halted and, posted at new points of vantage, set to work.

Presently this determined and heroic, clinging and unyielding obstinacy began to have its effect. The advancing rebels, who had been almost on the run, slowed down, then halted, and then found it necessary to contemplate something else than a continuance of success. Coming finally to a dead standstill they realized that,

strong and triumphant and brave as they were, they had met an obstacle they could not overcome. That obstacle was a line of American soldiers who had been badly whipped, but who had from that whipping drawn such inspiration of stubborn heroism that nothing could move them further—not an inch—nor a hair's-breadth.

And who shall strive to paint the picture during all this time, of the rear, where frightened teamsters and panic-stricken stragglers and thieving camp-followers and all of the worst elements of the army, with horses and wagons, locked themselves together in an apparently inextricable tangle, blocking up the roads, cowering and sneaking and flying at the terror-breeding rumors which were borne on the idle winds thick as thistledown on a golden day in August? The uproar and the pitiful exhibitions of avarice and cowardice by turns, all the vilest, most abject frailties of the lowest order of humanity, made such a picture as would drive a decent man to the frenzied verge of suicide that he might no longer be charged to the race.

Have you ever seen a panic-stricken soldier in time of battle? If you have you will never forget it.

On the day following this I am describing so feebly, while temporarily with the cavalry at the rear, near Overall's Creek, I saw one such man; and the picture is still vivid although thirty years have since elapsed. For days it was with me, filling me with horror and giving to my waking hours the terrors of a hideous nightmare. He was a young man of perhaps twenty, stout and well made, with a big round head fronted by a big round face which usually held, as one could plainly see, a plenty of rich healthy color; now, however, it was ghastly in its pallor, the clear white having grown a greenish yellow—as if his fright had upset his internal economy and poured the bile into his veins. It was at a moment of comparative quiet, front and rear, only an occasional shot to be heard, when he came down the pike from the front with all the speed of a quarter horse. The general commanding the cavalry, D. S. Stanley, sitting on his horse near me, seemed to know at once what this strange sight of a

man fleeing, when no one pursued, as if for his life, meant; although it was a puzzle to me; and quickly whipping out his light slender sword he drove at the fugitive as if he were charging a battery. The presence of the real and tangible danger in his front compelled the trembling wretch to pause in his insane flight from the imaginary danger behind him. He halted under the nose of the general's horse and looked up at the stern soldier with such an expression of agonized, beseeching appeal as I have never seen in mortal eyes before nor since.

"Where are you going, you—whelp!" demanded Stanley, hesitating when he came to the epithet as if he were searching for the vilest term in his vocabulary.

A wild waving of his hands and rolling of his eyes, with a torrent of incoherent gibberish, was all the reply the coward could give.

"Get back to your place! Back, I say; back, I say; back, you damned scoundrel, back, back, back!" and with each "back" the general's withy blade swished in the air and smote, flat side on, the fellow's great fat cheeks with a sound like a pistol shot.

As God is my judge, it was pitiful!

The coward writhed and screamed and begged, but made no effort either to excuse or defend himself. Such abasement as he showed of God's image! It was too much, and I turned aside to banish the sight from my eyes, and when I looked again he was scurrying back to the front as fast as he had come, with the fierce, lean general tearing after him and bending over his horse's neck to strike him whenever he could reach him with the flat of that wickedly hissing sword!

The Union right on Wednesday morning stretched to the south, facing strongly, almost squarely to the east, while the center faced south by east, and the left faced in a direction to the east, trending slightly to the north, conforming its front to the vagaries of the stream. In the afternoon the right wing was faced in a semicircular form squarely to the west, with its right fully three miles north of the point where it (the right of the right wing)

had rested in the morning, while the left and center, compressed into the smallest possible space, held a position facing due south, slightly in the rear of the position occupied by the left wing in the morning.

This does not make it plain, nor will it become so unless you will take the pains to make your own diagram, remembering that the right and center fell back as if they had used the right flank of the left wing as a pivot till, if the line had swung back intact, the right flank of the right wing would have, in describing the arc of a circle, traversed a distance of more than four miles, while in a straight line it did go more than three miles from the point where Bragg fell upon the two brigades at their breakfast with hot coffee. The steady advance of the Confederates, while it was persistently and obstinately resisted (for, from three to four hours passed away before the Union troops were beaten back to the position last given above), received its first substantial check when it reached "John F.'s" brigade in the center, and the hard fighting of that heroic band even long after it had been deserted on right and left, gave time for new combinations and alignments to be formed on the Union side. Then this brigade, isolated and surrounded, cut its way out at the point of the bayonet.

And when the firing was suddenly stilled for a brief moment, between 12 o'clock noon and 1 o'clock p.m., the miles of ground between the Franklin road on the south and running east and west, and the Nashville pike to the northeast, which ran south by west, was filled, open fields and tangled cedar brakes, rounded dells and rocky hills, with dead men; and living men, dying, maimed and shattered, moaning and shrieking, cursing and praying, thousands of them; and upon them fell a merciless chilling and stiffening misty rain, from a sky as cruelly cold and gray as ever frowned upon human beings in their death agony. Now, "old John F." was a dark-eyed young Indianian, who commanded the brigade to which our soldier boys, Nat and Tom, and the rest of them, belonged. He was a quiet man ordinarily but could be noisy when occasion required; then it was observed that whatever noise he made went directly

to the point of the business in hand, and whether it was much or little it was always just enough and accomplished its purpose. His dark hair and closely cropped beard framed a handsome, manly face that was peculiarly strong in repose and remarkably vivid and inspiring when he was aroused. This setting gave, perhaps, additional depth to his dark eyes which were soft and winning, and only the close observer would detect the lambent fires that slept and burned in their depths. When aroused, as in time of battle, these eyes were to those upon whom they flashed an inspiration of courage and heroism more startling and awakening in its power than the sudden blast of the trumpet sounding the charge. He was quick in his movements, but never nervous; and his iron will never acknowledged defeat. Without ostentation, indeed having a pride which would not permit itself to condescend to such a thing any more than it would permit him to make himself common, he seemed one of those rarely poised men whose lives are governed by fixed laws—men whom it is impossible to disturb in their well ascertained and defined and thoroughly understood duties and purposes. This did not preclude a quickness, as of lightning, in moments of emergency; only the decision thus arrived at in the winking of an eye, was for firmness and enthusiastic strength as if it had been the result of years of careful deliberation. And how unerring was the aim of this instinct, which makes great the man who possesses it, whoever he may be or wherever he may be placed, we shall see.

"Old John F." I repeat, was a young man—only about thirty at the time of the occurrences which I am now recalling; he was given the venerable appellation by the men in his command in compliance with the unwritten law which prescribes that the head or master, whether in the army or the workshop is "the old man" to the men under him; especially if they love him; whether he is an octogenarian or a beardless boy. When he rode around among his men their eyes followed him with a look of affectionate regard. And among the survivors of the old Seventh Brigade you will find gray-headed worshippers of two commanders above all others dear to them, and whom they dub "old Pap Thomas" and "John F."

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE GIRL I LEFT BEHIND ME!"

"THAT begins the business, without any flap-doodle." quietly observed Nat as the first shot was heard on Wednesday morning; it made a noise very little louder than the snapping of a good-sized dry twig and yet its significance was recognized at once by all.

"Yes," replied Tom, rising to his feet and taking up his rubber blanket from the ground, "that means business. All ready there, men; get your places!"

"That's one thing I like about a battle," continued Nat. "That is, if I like anything at all about such murderous work. There ain't no fuss and feathers about it! You get right down to business from the jump!"

"Am I to understand, Lieutenant Kellogg," asked Tom mockingly, "that you really don't enjoy a battle?"

"Well, yes; that's about the size of it! There may be great and glorious fellows who revel in this sort of thing—maybe these fellows who wear gold buttons and velvet facings and white duck trousers and paper-collars do—sometimes, when I have seen them raising so much dust on reviews, galloping up and down the line on their fierce he-male charges, at such times I have been impressed that they never are happy, never can be, except when they are stalking godlike through the awful hell of battle—but I'm different you know—I'm off of another piece of cloth, and I don't enjoy it like it was a Sunday-school picnic, to tell the truth."

"What do you do it for, then?"

"Now there's where you strike me right hard, captain! I often ask myself that same question, especially when I meet one of these Awful Beings whose political friends

have helped them to get commissions as colonels or Jigadier brindles, but who are no more fit for soldiers or to command soldiers than old puffy Jordan is. When I meet one of them and think that maybe the next fight I get into I will be under his command, then I wonder why I stay in the service. And when I get into a battle and realize the danger I am in no matter who is in command, I wonder more than ever."

"But we are not serving under that kind of a man."

"No. So far as the brigade is concerned we're all right. But——"

"Well, well, I say," cried Tom impatiently, "why don't you quit it then?"

"I don't know, unless it is because this thing's got to be did, and I reckon I'm as much bound to help do it as anybody. I'm in for the war; and I'm going to stay. The South's got to be wallopped if we've got it into us, and I'm going to do my share. But it ain't no particular fun, my friend."

"You're fighting for a great deal, Nat."

"Yes. Among other things to see how high little Susie will carry her head when it's over, and to give little Dick something to brag about when he meets old Jordan's grandson at school, a few years from now."

"Haven't you heard that Jordan has been made colonel of a new regiment?"

"Great Julius——"

"Fall in, men, fall in! Every man to his place! They're coming!"

But it was a feint merely; serious enough in all conscience, but still nothing more than a terrific firing of musketry and artillery. The men were held strongly in check and warned not to fire till they could see something to shoot at. Again and again this was repeated, till they grew somewhat used to it and fell to joking in a half-careless way, but were still watchful. . . .

The minutes grew into hours, and it had got to be 8 o'clock, and still, beyond protecting themselves as best they could from the heavy firing of the enemy in his earthworks across the open field, they had nothing to do but listen to the steady roar on the right which came swinging about to the left and rear with significant rapidity.

"No fight for us to-day." The tone was fairly despondent, but the words had scarcely been uttered when the reply came:

"Yes, there is, by God! See, they're coming!" cried a quick, tense voice.

And "they" were coming, with such a din of shrieking shells as rent the air to ribbons, and sending in advance a shower of leaden balls whistling and singing overhead, and spat, spat, spattling as they struck the cedar trees or the great gray boulders, giving a deadlier sound when they buried themselves in human flesh—a sound that was followed by a low moan from the victim and a nauseating sensation within his comrades who gave a hasty glance at his drawn face and his eyes filled with a wild, half-beseeching, horrified look, and then turned away to face the foe with an effort of will that paled their lips and sent the blood crowding their hearts almost to bursting.

"Steady there, men! Don't fire till you get the word!"

They crouched like beasts, waiting for their prey; their eyes gleaming and their breath coming with but a faint fluttering, so strongly repressed was the emotion which they felt. . . .

A wild taunting cheer came from the woods opposite as a long line of gray-clad men leaped over the line of intrenchments into the open field and with trailed arms started on a loping run for the clump of cedars in the edge of which the Twenty-first lay. Fierce and steady as they came their line was straight as a board.

"Put down that gun—what do you mean? That's the third load you've put in and you've rammed your cartridge, ball first!" cried Nat.

"I—I—don't you see—" stammered the culprit.

"Get to the rear—*now*," answered Nat with a voice filled with suppressed rage and contempt. "Now, I say, or by the Eternal I'll shoot you dead," and at the muzzle of a Colt's navy in Nat's hand the one coward in the company turned and fled like a frightened deer. The men saw in the flash of an eye; some, it would seem, without turning their heads; they all understood Nat's motive and they all approved his act.

Ah! what whips and scorns must he not bear with him who thus flies from his duty! Better to face the unutterably awful challenge of death, to lose the wager and to endure the brief pain of dissolution and leave your clay on the field—a thousand times better! Of a truth, to the man who is healthy in mind and body the most dreadful moment is that when he sits hob and nob with Death, piercing those sightless sockets with a glance of steady defiance, whether he feels it in his heart or no, and giving back, grin for grin, the mockery of those fleshless chops, till the brain reels! Heads have whitened and hearts have grown old in one brief moment of such a strain! But how infinitely preferable that to the gnawing of the worm at the heart of the man who remembers that he fled his duty! How polluted the life saved in such a way!

“Steady men—don’t fire till you get the word!” and the half-dozen muskets that had been involuntarily raised were slowly lowered again.

Would the time never come?

The charging column deliver a volley—one terribly effective! Now, surely, is the time! But no—“Steady there—not yet, not yet—wait for the word!”

And the cool commander sits motionless on his horse, his eyes alone showing a sign of life as they glance rapidly back and forth taking in all parts of the field, and watching this devil’s kettle till the color should come which would tell him when to throw in *his* ingredients to give new wickedness to the weird, hellish flames.

Flesh and blood cannot stand this much longer! The men feel, strong as is the power of the discipline under which they are held, that they must fire. The enemy are so near that they can read the “C. S. A.” on their belts, and they are becoming insolently exultant.

“Now then; *let ’em have it!*”

The discharge of their guns was like the roar of a blast of wind, only quicker, beginning with a low growl and rising and swelling into a thunderous crash that seemed to shake the earth! It smote the enemy swift and sudden and awful as the wrath of God; and the graycoats littered the field like sheep upon a hillside.

"Keep it up, men! Load and fire at will! Don't let a man get back alive!" the officers shrieked and danced about like madmen, but with a dreadful method in their madness; and never losing sight of the chances of the fight.

A puff of heavy, mist-laden wind floats off the smoky pall and reveals the combatants—the men of the Twenty-first loading and firing with the fury of devils, groaning and growling and filling the air with inarticulate murmurs of an indescribable fierceness, while the startled Confederates resolutely and nobly strive to close up their decimated ranks, and fairly manage to rally their brave men, and with it all keep up a fire under which their blue-coated opponents are toppling over by dozens.

Ah! we can look back at it, through the softening blue haze of more than thirty years, and understand why there was no man there, either in the gray or the blue, who was ashamed that day that he was an American!

Was it a year or a day? an hour or five minutes? At such times one cannot stop to measure the sweep of the long, gray beard with his cleaving scythe—there is another reaper whose keen steel interests us more! But at last the Confederates begin to retire; they fall back in comparatively good order; no frantic, panicky haste, but facing their foe and sending Parthian messengers as they go to swell the death roll in their enemy's camp.

And now the roar extends along the whole line; heavy and continuous on the Union left and center, but fiercest and most appalling on the right, still drawing nearer and nearer to the rear, till at last the Seventh Brigade realizes that the enemy are not only in their front and on their right and left, but squarely behind them, as well. A dense cloud hangs over all that part of the field, lit up momentarily with lines of red flashing fires as a regiment delivers a volley, or suddenly illuminated by a swelling, palpitating splash of flame as the great guns bellow and belch their monster missiles through quivering masses of men.

You are kneeling; partly to be able to aim better under the smoke and partly to gain the small protection

that a low boulder or the trunk of a fallen tree will give you; you are loading and firing with all the rapidity possible; you can scarcely spare the time to aim at any one individual in the screaming, yelling throng before you—you do well if you take care to depress your piece so as to make sure not to overshoot, and you blaze away at the herd; you find that your shivers have passed away and you grow heated; your nervousness has gone; you do not lose the sense of danger, but you grow careless of it or accustomed to it, and as you work away, your gun barrel growing hot and foul so that a stream of fire spouting out of the muzzle and falling to the ground follows each discharge, you realize that your lips are tightly closed and that you are grinding your clinched teeth keeping time with them to the melody of some old tune—"The Monastery Bells," "The Maiden's Prayer," "Rosalie the Prairie Flower," "Old Dan Tucker," "Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming," "The Blue Juniata"—heaven knows what, and you smile at the incongruity of the thing; an exclamation at your side tells you that your file leader has been hit and you catch a gleam of the red blood spouting from his lips or welling forth from the ugly hole in his chest or thigh—and you help to draw him to the shelter of a great boulder and with scarcely a word to him you hasten back, as if to a delightful pastime, to your post and begin again loading and firing and grinding your teeth, and occasionally giving vent to a groan that is half a growl, and the meaning or motive of which you could not explain if you tried; you notice that the cedar bough, but an inch in diameter, hanging near your head sways back and forth with a quick, jerky motion and that it has been shivered and splintered to the semblance of a brush or miniature broom by repeated shots which strike it and give it the eccentric vibration you have observed, and you wonder, without any alarm, why it is that, presenting a front to the fire so much greater than the twig, you, too, have not been riddled out of all human form and shape; and as you almost forget your surroundings, musing upon chances so curious, you are suddenly aroused by a shower of warm liquid which spots your hands and face with red, and

you find that the man standing over you has been struck by a ragged fragment of a shell or by a round shot, and as his poor frame reels and totters to its fall his blood is spouting forth like a fountain; you inhale the saltpeter smoke till your thirst grows intolerable and you suck the muddy dregs from the bottom of your canteen, squeezing out the last drop for the poor fellow lying near by with fast glazing eyes and whitey-blue lips who can only murmur "water," while his hand wanders to his breast where you instinctively know there is an ambrotype—the pictures of the loving, patient wife, the sturdy boy and the bright-eyed girl who, hundreds of miles off up in the North are building snow forts or coasting or contriving Christmas presents for the father who is at the front—and you note that a look of peace shines in his eyes, dull as they are, when you unbutton his coat and transfer the pictures to your own breast; the sweeping boughs of the low-hanging cedar over your head are cut off by a screaming shell and topple down upon you, but you shake them off as you would a cloud of summer insects, and—you work away; your cartridges give out and you calmly roll your dead messmate over and supply yourself from his box; the air is filled with moans and curses in which you unconsciously join in obedience to the great law of sympathy which finds you quick to respond to its subtle influence, and you do not rouse until the firing ceases, or you are summoned to a bayonet charge, when the red coals of your dull, obstinate mood flash into the roaring, leaping flame of a reckless enthusiasm. You were sickened at the sight of a dead man yesterday; to-day you coolly plunder his haversack for food which he no longer needs. You are usually morbidly sensitive to the presence of death, and the sight of a wound, even a small cut, makes you squeamish, but to-day you fight among acres of dead and dying men, showing all manner of wounds and hurts, mutilated beyond recognition or drawn by pain into shapes so horribly grotesque that years after you will recall them with a shudder and you are unmoved and gaze upon the scene with what you reproachfully think is apathetic indifference. You wonder if it is you? and what the name of the battle will be? and whether

your side is winning or being whipped? and what the boys are at, just about this time, up North on the old farm?—tearing down the snow-covered fodder-shocks doubtless to feed the cattle in the woods-pasture—yes, that's what they will be doing just now; when they get through they will load the sled with beech and hickory logs for fuel at the house, and, after spending the rest of the day a-rabbit-hunting they will go to spelling-school in the evening or to a taffy-pulling over at Slimminses, where there is a house full of strapping big girls! And the picture swiftly changing, you see a vision of the low bridge on the country road just below the big gate, and the shoals of minnows darting about in the clear, shallow water, shivering the pool into tremulous waves of liquid gold, just as they used to do on a summer afternoon when you were a boy fishing there with a pin hook fastened to a tow string, with an apple tree sprout for a rod.

No time to think of these things? My dear sir, in the dual thinking that you are keeping up all the time these apparently incongruous thoughts are stronger and livelier and more absorbing even than those which enable you to keep photographing on your mind all the minutiae of the tremendous scene enacting before and around you.

The brigades on the right and left have given way and the red waves of carnage tower above "John F." and the old Seventh Brigade, mountain high, threatening to topple over upon the devoted band and submerge and bury it out of sight. And still it fights on—every moment worth millions to the disorganized troops on the left and in the rear who, while the overwhelming torrent is angrily striving to sweep away this obstinate rock in its path, are gathering themselves together, forming new alignments and preparing for that final resistance which will be successful.

And "John F.!" How the men watch him on the bay horse which, thinking with his rider's head, needs no guidance, as he rides in and out among them, the incarnation of the fearless spirit of battle, encouraging no less by his voice and the flash of his eyes than by his presence and example, the heroes upon whom so much depends!

If they hold out a little longer, surrounded as they are, and receiving from right and left, front and rear, volley after volley and blasts of shot and shell every second, the day may be retrieved and the army saved! If they yield a moment too soon the living wave of gray-clad valor pressing so eagerly up will roar on and through and over everything and annihilate the shattered, struggling mob that this morning was an army with banners. Will they be equal to it?

So long as they can see "John F." riding about among them, and can hear his voice bidding them stand their ground they will try to equal their task. They will do all that mortal men can do—ay! they will essay more, so long as he is with them. They make no noisy pretense, and give vent to none of the flatulent cheers that sound so thrilling on the parade ground, but they answer his burning glance with a steadfast regard that must make his heart swell with pride that he commands such men! Does not his aspect tell as much as he feels his own hot blood pouring forth from his own wound and laughs at the fears of the bystanders?

A putty-faced, panicky colonel dashes up to him, crying, "The day is lost!"

He rises in his stirrups and seems to grow a giant as he bursts out with thrilling indignation and contempt—"Lost! The day is *never* lost!" and from an atmosphere that seems charged with electricity, the putty-faced colonel rides away with a new seeming of courage.

Tom and Nat, we may be sure, are at their work. There is no hesitation about it—they make no false moves. They have quickly learned their dreadful business. And while the flaming enthusiasm of the one inspires the men like a draught of fiery wine, the calm, imperturbable strength of the other holds them steadfast. Their men are falling like leaves. They close up the ranks and concentrate their little company.

But even steel will crumble under constant pounding.

"Great God, Nat, we are falling back!"

The tremendous force of the enemy is, truly, forcing them slowly but surely back into the center of the clump of cedars in which they are posted.

Do you know what it means in the fierce stress of a hard-fought battle to lose even an inch of ground? You have held it against fearful odds, and you have endured the heaviest shocks—you feel that you have won the right to stay there. Then, as the irresistible force presses upon you and you find that unconsciously you have yielded a foot, five feet, ten feet, a great band of lead is fastened about your heart and compressing and weighing with the weight and force of tons, it crushes your spirit and fills you with a dismay such as no other disaster can give.

What was to be done? No amount of vehement exposition, threatening, pleading, could win back the lost fifty feet of ground, nor stay the slow retrogression that spoke with such dreadful significance.

Even "John F." who held the Twenty-first as a sheet anchor to windward, felt his heart sink as he realized the almost utter impossibility of staying the swiftly rolling on disaster.

After all, must we yield? If we could only make one rally, and drive the enemy back, if but for a moment, it were worth ten thousand lives.

And men's hearts sunk to think that no human agency could meet the emergency!

But hark! What is that?

The soaring thrill of a fife, with the confident rattling of a drum, climbing up and out and over the roar of the conflict—and men paused, with a new light in their eyes, to listen!

It was old Fielding, and Glick, the Dutch drummer, and the strains that nerved men's hearts were those of "The Girl I Left Behind Me!"

The old man had stepped out to the front of the colors, and with his bare head thrown back and his body quivering with excitement, his long, bony fingers were hopping over the vents like mad. He had watched the battle closely, barely grudging the time to do his appointed work of carrying back the wounded. And when he saw the lapping wave of disaster reach to the very verge of irreparable ruin he grew wonderfully excited. Was it not God's own war, and could he do nothing to defeat

the enemies of the Most High? Surely, what he could he would. He knew the power of his life, and calling to the drummer, he went to the front to lead the advance. No fear for the Dutchman! Setting his face with the rigidity of a wooden man, he stepped firmly forth, rattling his drumsticks as coolly as if he were on parade:

"The Girl I Left Behind Me!"

The old man had chosen shrewdly. If he had played any one of the well known so-called patriotic airs he would only have got himself laughed at.

"Susie!" yelled Nat. "Great Julius Cæsar! Come on, boys!"

And with a cheer—not a shrieking, bloodthirsty screech such as, I regret to say, the Confederates used, but with a wholesome, manly cheer, full of round, ringing volume—the whole regiment sprang forward after old Fielding and the Dutchman, hurling back the enemy as the ship tosses back the spray, regaining their lost ground and holding it for a few moments—a length of time sufficient to complete the rearrangement of the lines in the rear.

The time had come for the brigade to retire, but they were all loath to do so. They fell back sullenly, pausing every now and then to deliver a volley—it made no difference which way they fired; the enemy was all around them.

Even to the young commander the admission implied in a retreat, necessary though it might be, was beyond words distasteful. He let his men drift slowly back for a few minutes, and then, unable to control the feeling which sent the flush to his brow, he seized a stand of colors and sprang upon a huge boulder in the depths of the thicket. His voice rang out like a trumpet:

"Fall in men—form here! If we cannot whip them we can at least show them how *men can die!*"

He needed no more satisfactory assurance of their devotion to him than to hear them cry "Come on; come on! Here's "John F.!" and to see them throng about him and align themselves, the man of the Twenty-first, elbow to elbow with his comrade of the Seventy-eighth, and the Seventy-fourth and Thirty-seventh mingling with

each other, while the red trimmed artillery men belonging to Marshall and Ellsworth whose poor guns stand away out there lost and deserted, give a streak of color here and there in the line.

And here they fired another volley or two—but it was useless. The fiery Indian saw that to hold them there was really to accomplish nothing more than to give the example how men *could* die—which, after all, was not the wisest thing that could be done—and very reluctantly he pointed their way out, following last to safety himself, like the captain who leaves his sinking ship only after he has seen his men all rescued from the threatening perils.

And a very few minutes later he has his men again in perfect order, ready to fight and burning to do so, having the added stimulus of a desire to revenge themselves upon their overbearing adversary. But though they lay like hounds held in the leash, watching the rest of the day for an opportunity, it did not come; and the night closed in cold and foggy and gray.

And the chilling rain dropped down from cedar boughs upon ghastly upturned faces distorted with pain and lined with agony such as no man having realized lives to describe.

And the faces were the faces of men who were strong and buoyant a few hours before; men who a few years ago were laughing babes with dainty, rounded limbs and eyes full of the glory of the dawn, and soft, white throats which held low cooings and happy gurglings—babes whom young mothers bowed down to and worshiped, finding in them the first glimpse of heaven that comes to womankind, or mankind either, for the matter of that!

But the dead eyes which showed the indelible photograph of the pangs of hell through which in dying they had passed gave no hint of what they once were! And the rigid, sallow cheeks grew only more rigid as the chilling drops fell upon them; and were not the divinely rounded satin spheres where a mother's velvet lips were wont to linger lovingly!

Ah me! The changes that are thus wrought in the

weary, feverish, troublous journey from the cradle to the grave! As, growing to strong manhood, we leave the best of us behind in our soft-eyed mothers' hearts, God grant that we may in the new life only take it up again and lose the memory of that which has gone between!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE HOUR AND THE MAN.

THE situation as between Rosecrans and Bragg, from the close of Wednesday's fighting up to 3 o'clock on Friday, was tersely summed up by our plain-speaking Nat, when he said that "one was afraid and the other darsen't!"

General Rosecrans was well content to remain quiet, for every moment so gained was used to reorganize and revive and supply his army. He had evidently been quite deceived as to the ability if not the strength of the enemy in his front; and in the process of being undeceived had conceived a great respect for his adversary—very different from the opinion he held when, debonair and confident, he had moved out from his camps near Nashville.

His new position was very strong; but while he may have felt satisfied that he could resist attack, there is not lacking a plenty of evidence going to show that the idea of moving forward, of assuming the offensive, lay so very remotely before him that he had not thought it worthy of present consideration. In short, he was glad of the chance to rest and recuperate; but had no sort of definite purpose to take the aggressive.

But sometimes there is a Power higher even than the general in command, to decide the fate of the battle in compliance with a plan in the framing of which the general has had no hand. There never was a general in the American army who could with any sort of accuracy foretell the issue of an engagement with the enemy, of course. The one who could come the nearest to it was George H. Thomas—but he could not, perhaps, always do so.

An idiot once said that "It is the unexpected which always happens," as if it would be unexpected if it were not a "happening;" and the world has been so caught by the turn of the phrase that it is on every tongue, and I was about to use it here myself.

If a general could take into consideration all the possibilities along with the probabilities in forecasting his battle he would not even then by any means have covered the field; for there are contingencies lying in the vague region of the impossibilities, as we call them, which play the chief part sometimes on such occasions. And who can weigh and estimate them? There are "chances," so called, which lie in the purposes of that higher Power and which are beyond mortal ken. You may believe that you have the Lord on your side, and *know* that the heaviest battalions and the best position are with you, and then you may go swaggering forth like a lazy careless Goliath only to meet your half-naked little David and receive your death-blow.

At 3 o'clock on Friday afternoon neither General Rosecrans nor the man who accomplished it for him had the slightest notion that in two hours' time the long struggle would be over and Murfreesboro would be won. The outlook was dark and gloomy to the Union commander at that hour—perhaps darker even than it was at 1 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon—and the sun that was so soon to shine upon him sent no ray in advance to herald its rising.

Although it may not have occurred to him, General Rosecrans' chief strength lay in the circumstance that he had at his back, under his command, an army which would fight ten times more stubbornly than it had fought on Wednesday, if such a thing were possible; because it had been whipped and was consumed with a fever to retaliate. The men of that army watched for their opportunity with eyes red and bloodshot, with angry impatience and devouring chagrin.

With General Bragg things were somewhat different. He had won on Wednesday, but at a fearful cost. Doubtless he would have been greatly relieved if he could have gotten away from Rosecrans' front, quietly and

honorably; for then he would have felt that his laurels were secure for all time; while, so long as he was compelled to face Rosecrans, they were in danger. Still, he was in much the better plight—or thought he was, which amounted to much the same thing. He had an army of exultant men behind him, ready to go into another fight with all the reckless enthusiasm that victory gives; and as the chances are usually weighed, this conferred upon him a great advantage. But the imposition of the necessity to be swaggering and defiant which was upon him then, is never without its drawbacks. I don't believe he felt like it, but he was compelled to constantly make a show of offering the offensive—and Bragg was too good a soldier not to know that every time he thus demonstrated he opened himself up to a range of dreadful possibilities and hidden chances; and in so far, weakened himself.

He must have been annoyed at the strength of the position Rosecrans had taken up on Wednesday afternoon; the Union general had skillfully chosen it when his disaster was at its height—and therein is testimony of his soldierly greatness. During all of Thursday and Friday up to 3 o'clock in the afternoon he was constantly feeling the Union lines for a weak place, and apparently finding none—for, as to its front, the Union army was as round and smooth as a ball, with never a crack nor crevice into which he could have thrust the point of a cambric needle, even. During these two days his cavalry were circling around Rosecrans' army, burning trains, capturing stores and animals and frightening the stragglers, teamsters and sutlers out of their wits; but especially charged, as Bragg himself testifies, to ascertain whether the Union army was in retreat. The urgency with which he repeated these instructions brings up the recollection of the hero who had the bear by the tail and therefore at a great disadvantage, but who dared not let go. Bragg feared that he must fight, sooner or later; and knew that the later it should be that he fell upon his adversary the more dangerous it would be to him and the honors he had already achieved.

While it is no part of my purpose to give anything

more than the general outlines of this great battle, contenting myself when I come to details with narrating only those things which I saw myself, I have taken pains to give those outlines with such accuracy as the historical material available will permit. But, of course, in doing this I do not propose to hold myself bound to accept the theories of historians as to what were or may have been the purposes of the two commanders from time to time in that nine-days' conflict. For instance, I dissent, after long study, from the generally accepted belief that the purpose of the movement on Bragg's right, under command of Breckinridge, Friday afternoon, was simply to make Polk's right more secure by driving from their position the Union troops whose fire, if they should open fire, would enfilade the fighting bishop's line. Bragg says that this was his purpose; but soldiers sometimes, missing their objective, find it policy to declare that they had something else in mind.

In the first place the troops which Bragg said could enfilade Polk's line, were not at all on the offensive, nor was there any reason to believe that they would be so put. Doubtless Bragg knew that they were thrown across the river (I will make this plain further on) more than anything else to strengthen the weak place in the Union line, if there was a weak place. In the second place notwithstanding the terror which military writers all display for it, an enfilading fire is not the one to be the most dreaded, and Polk had a dozen ways of avoiding its evil effects if it should ever be opened upon him. In the third place Bragg knew that the Union right was entirely beyond his reach unless he should shift the great bulk of his army some miles toward Nashville, which would of course leave Murfreesboro and his lines of communication unprotected. The center was as round and safe as skill could make it. He knew, I repeat, that if there was a weak point on the line, it was where the Union left flank touched and crossed the stream—Stone River; and he knew that if he could break the line there he could throw his assaulting column into the rear of the semicircular Union line, when, with his numerous troops in front to attack promptly, he would be in a fair way to

repeat his success of Wednesday. I regard it as an evidence that this was his purpose, that he gave to Breckinridge at least ten thousand infantry, two fresh batteries to reinforce those he already had, and two thousand cavalry under Wharton and Pegram, to constitute the assaulting column. The line which he says he sent Breckinridge to dislodge, did not comprise, at the most, more than three or four thousand men; and to drive these from an unprotected position and one of no great natural strength, would not call for so large a force as he saw fit to send forth.

Whatever may be thought of his subsequent generalship, it cannot be questioned that at Stone River Bragg bore himself as a bold and skillful fighter; and I do not hesitate to say that but for "John F." and his Seventh Brigade, the rebels would have broken the Union line on the left and gained the rear of the semicircular formation in which the Union army was posted; and the disaster of Wednesday would have been repeated with the still more evil result that the Army of the Cumberland would have been wiped out of existence.

And while I am not writing a history, yet I make no apology for straightening out the tangle in which has been involved one of the most brilliant exploits of the whole war, namely, the charge across the river on Friday afternoon, at Stone River. The unworthy ambitions of men have obscured the truth. I will try to do no injustice to any man; but whatever happens I will do justice to the one man who is entitled to the credit for the salvation of the army that day, if my poor powers are equal to the work. With the modesty of true merit he never engaged in the scramble with the pretenders for the honor which belongs to him alone.

The line upon which Breckinridge made his assault was commanded by Colonel Samuel Beatty and was composed of Van Cleve's division, numbering less than three thousand men. Grose's brigade, numbering, perhaps, twelve hundred men, was in the timber on Van Cleve's (Beatty's) left, but not in position it would seem, to be of service. These troops had been placed across the river on Thursday evening, and from that time had not

been engaged up to 3 o'clock Friday afternoon except in the way of light skirmishing and an artillery duel or so, harmless in effect, if noisy. The Seventh Brigade, with the division to which it belonged (Negley's) had been brought from another part of the field, and posted a little back from the stream, but where the troops on the other side could be plainly seen.

The day was cold and rainy; there was no comfort to be had in any part of the field, where, with dreary monotony, mud and water uniformly prevailed. There were no fires and no fuel with which to make fires. There was nothing to eat or drink which would put the warmth of life into a man. Our soldiers were worn out and exhausted, and only kept alive by the hope that something would turn up to give them another chance at the enemy; and while this hope kept them up to the point of endurance it made them grim and stern and wickedly quiet. The manner in which they eyed the general or staff-officers as they rode by, as if they would read in their faces the welcome news that the fight would soon begin or know the reason why, showed how deeply they were smarting under the humiliation of their recent defeat, and how they yearned to retaliate at any cost.

For perhaps an hour everything had been exasperatingly quiet. Then all at once, away over toward the center, the Confederate artillery begun a furious cannonading; and instantly all eyes and thoughts were turned that way. It was Bragg's feint to draw attention from his real purpose; and it was successful; for, despite official reports to the contrary, there were few, perhaps none, who dreamed that an attack was about to be made on Van Cleve's division. So that, almost before he was observed at all, Breckinridge, with his regiments massed on the center and square after square following on till the array seemed irresistible even if we had had ten times the force to face it, came suddenly sweeping down on the thin line deployed in front of the river.

It was a grand sight, and yet a terrible one, to see him move majestically forward—and there is an indescribable majesty in masses of well trained, well disciplined men under arms and going calmly to their horrid work—re-

ceiving the fire of Van Cleve's skirmishers, and even of a battery or two, but making no sign, until the proper position had been reached.

Then he poured in a volley under which the earth rocked and the heavens rang!—musketry and artillery roared and crashed as if to annihilate the devoted band upon whom their leaden and iron missiles were showered! As Van Cleve's heroes warmed to their work and replied with such effectiveness as they could, Breckinridge's men halted; and for a few minutes the sadly unequal conflict went on.

But not for long! The history of Wednesday was repeated in small, and slowly but surely Van Cleve's men were forced back, into the stream and across it, through the lines of the Seventh Brigade and beyond, where they halted to reform.

And with a shrill shriek of victory from ten thousand throats the Confederates rushed up to the bank of the stream, and begun to cross!

Once they were over and had gotten a footing, we have seen what the consequences would have been!

Surely, now there is no time to be lost!

Thank God, no time *was* lost!

Colonel John F. Miller, commander of the Seventh Brigade, and known to us so far as "old John F." the name given him by the men he commanded, sat upon his horse watching with growing impatience the assault upon Van Cleve. To him came colonels and majors and captains commanding regiments and batteries in the division, for counsel and guidance.

Instinctively they turned to him—so quickly does capacity and born leadership in a man manifest itself and win recognition. But, indeed, aside from this, if the colonels and majors and captains had not been drawn thus instinctively to Colonel Miller and had been minded to seek their brigade and division commanders for instructions, they would not have found them. For, while a careful perusal of the various official reports of the affair will put a picture in your mind of a most imposing and awfully majestic array of generals and colonels full upon the scene, sitting grim and threatening upon fiery

he-chargers and sternly waiting the moment when they should fall upon and consume the enemy, horse, foot and artillery, yet in point of fact, as this present writer well knows, there was "neither hair nor hide" of them to be found anywhere near the scene.

Miller sent his staff officers and orderlies, Lieutenant (afterward Brigadier-General) Henry M. Cist, Lieutenant Frank I. Tedford, Captain Cheney, Lieutenant Ayers, and Major A. B. Bonnaffin (I repeat that I am writing now from what I saw with my own eyes and heard with my own ears), to scour the field to find a general officer and ask permission to cross the stream to Van Cleve's relief. Only one such officer was found, General John M. Palmer (of Illinois), and from him came, instead of the desired permission, a positive prohibition—an order not to cross. The other two brigade commanders, belonging to the division, General Speer of Tennessee, and Colonel T. R. Stanley, of the Eighteenth Ohio, each ranking Miller, were not present. General Negley, the division commander, was not to be found.

This is easily accounted for by the circumstance heretofore set forth, namely, that the general attention was attracted by the heavy cannonading to the right under cover of which it was believed an assault would be made upon the left center. While our generals were busy watching for this assault with a view to meet it, the real assault was a surprise to them. The thing that it is difficult to understand in this matter, is why these unquestionably brave and skillful soldiers should not have admitted this by no means discreditable fact.

The plain truth is that in the absence of any one from whom to receive definite orders Colonel Miller found himself in a most embarrassing position, with a tremendous responsibility suddenly thrust upon him. Both the embarrassment and responsibility were heightened, of course, by the fact that the one general officer who could be found ordered him *not* to cross the stream; in the circumstance that this officer, however, was not the commander of the division to which Miller belonged, lay, perhaps, an excuse for disregarding his order in case of an emergency faintly warranting such disregard even

though he was the ranking officer in that part of the field.

A man less resolute would have felt amply justified in hesitating; and when, afterward reproached for the deplorable consequences that must have ensued, he would have had no trouble to clear himself upon technical grounds before the world.

Look at the position in which the young colonel found himself: The enemy in great strength and hot and exultant with the victory they had achieved over Van Cleve's division (and doubtless impressed by this repetition of Wednesday's success that they were destined always to succeed), were on the one bank of the narrow stream and already beginning to cross over; if they should cross they would break the Union line and unquestionably capture one-third of all the artillery belonging to the Army of the Cumberland; their comrades witnessing their success would at once accept it as the signal to move forward, and the consequence would have been, no doubt, irremediable disaster.

The Union troops facing Breckinridge and separated from him by the narrow stream formed a thin, single line, of not more than twenty-five hundred men, if so many. They could not have resisted an assault from Breckinridge; the mere weight of his columns would have broken them like a rope of sand. Standing still and receiving an assault they possessed a given strength; thrown forward with furious impetuosity, that strength would be greatly increased.

Miller found himself the ranking officer present with the division, and realized that the decision, fraught with so much importance, lay with him. He was surrounded by a group of regimental commanders who alternately studied the field and his face. He had been ordered not to cross. If in disregard of this order he should cross, one of two things would happen—either he would succeed or fail; succeed in at least giving the enemy a check and thus gaining time for fresh troops to come up to resist him, or fail to do anything more than fruitlessly sacrifice a number of human lives and in his overthrow give ground for the discouragement and disheartening of

the Union Army. More—if he succeeded, his *termerity* might be excused, but if he lost it would doubtless cost him his commission and send him to the rear in disgrace.

Then, what were his chances of success? He knew that the Seventh Brigade, then numbering perhaps fifteen hundred men would follow him—for he had learned that they would go anywhere that he might lead, only asking that he *should* lead. But how many more in the division could he count on? If he should get them all to follow him he would not have to exceed twenty-five hundred men, and that number was very small compared with the great swarming host over yonder, numerous enough to swallow him up and pursue their way without a perceptible halt. Would they realize the audacity of such a forlorn hope adventure, or would they think he was but the advance of a still larger force, and, pausing, give him time to damage them at all?

Here the lay of the ground favored him. The stream ran between bluff banks, perhaps twelve or fifteen feet in height; on the side where Miller sat upon his horse, pondering, the bluff receded back from the stream like the outside wall of an earthwork, only with more of a scoop, sloping down, so that a very large force might lie there for all that the rebels could see. If he made his charge with impetuosity and confidence, with his small force, would not the enemy reasonably conclude from the very meagerness of his numbers and force of his assault that he must have an ample reserve back of the bluff? It would depend largely upon this whether his movement would be a success.

It has taken me some little time to write out the description of the thoughts that must have passed through the commander's mind while he was reaching a conclusion. It will take you less time to read them. But the mental process with him was swift as lightning. He turned to the officers around him, saying quietly:

"I will charge them!"

His manner showed that he had duly weighed all the circumstances and had decided, once for all.

"And I'll follow you!" exclaimed the gallant Scott, wheeling and plunging his spurs into his steed, to hasten back to his regiment (the Nineteenth Illinois).

Colonel Scott's regiment belonged to the senior brigade of the division and that officer's alacrity gave Miller a thrill of satisfaction as he realized that he could count on help outside of his brigade. Colonel Stoughton of the Eleventh Michigan and other regimental commanders belonging to the Twenty-ninth Brigade, echoed Scott's enthusiastic adherence, and they, too, started for their troops.

Scott was a handsome man, valiant, young, daring and indomitable, with the pride in his profession that must always be a characteristic of the true soldier. He little thought that he was riding off to death, as he gayly galloped over to his command! And yet it was so!

There was no difficulty in getting the men to move forward. They had endured the terrible strain of allowing Van Cleve's men to pass over them without a sign of demoralization. The Twenty-first lay at the ford, in the bend of the stream, where Van Cleve's artillery crossed; and to see the brave fellows get up and open ranks to let the horses and guns pass through and then stoically lie down again to await the oncoming of the foe, holding their fire meantime although they were galled by the shots of the enemy—to see this, I say, was to see that which would bring the salt water to your eyes like the sudden gush of a spring rain.

All along the line men were seen to jump up and lope forward to the crest of the bluff where they might get better aim—and thus they gave the rebels one good volley before the command to charge was heard.

And then by four-fifths of them it was not heard, but seen; when "John F." went climbing over the bluff and dashing down to the water on his bay horse they knew what it meant; he was leading the way as was his custom, and with a cheer that was ringing and manly even if it was hoarse they followed after, wading through water churned into foam by the bullets of the rebels not thirty feet away and firing down upon them like mad!

It was a sight to remember to your dying day to see those men crossing the stream quiet, but eager and intent as if they had been starved and were hastening to a wedding feast, carefully lifting their cartridge-boxes so

that no water might get into their ammunition, and paying no more attention to the fire of the enemy than they would to the buzzing of a swarm of summer gnats.

The long-looked-for chance to get even had come, and they meant business! There was no nonsense about it! They would have charged the whole rebel army at that moment, and under the circumstances, without the slightest hesitation.

Has it ever been your fortune to receive a charge from an enemy who came steadily up to his work without the firing of a gun—hastening and eager, and yet calmly and sternly marching on to destroy you without deigning to notice the furious fire you were pouring into him? If so you know how terrible he appears. If he comes shouting and shooting he is not a hundredth part so terrifying. You may outnumber him ten to one, and yet he comes on with such calm but reckless impetuosity that you know he means to do *you* mischief, the every worst he *can* do, whatever may happen to him. He appears to have lost all thought or care for himself, whether he lives or dies is a matter of indifference to him—but he means at all events to kill *you*. There is that in such an enemy's aspect which startles you and saps your courage though you may be as brave as Julius Cæsar. You realize that it will be of no avail to expect anything reasonable from him any more than from a raving maniac—he will never know when he is whipped—he will never cease fighting till he is dead, and if you don't kill him he will kill you. Desperation breeds this sort of courage in some men; to others a sense of unmerited humiliation will bring it; whether it comes from either of these causes you may pray Heaven to be delivered from an adversary having it.

Like wild beasts springing upon their prey and too hungry to roar, the men of the Seventh Brigade with the comrades who so generously came to their assistance from the Twenty-ninth Brigade rushed upon Breckinridge's men, suddenly grown round-eyed with astonishment. And at their front their leader seemed to give the cue and invite their imitation.

In the middle of the stream one of Miller's staff officers,

Lieutenant Tedford, who had been sent to find a general officer who would authorize the charge, returned and gave the young colonel an order which he had received from the same general who had forbidden the assault.

"General Palmer says you must *not* cross the river——"

"It is too late now——" answered Miller; then he glanced anxiously at the men who were following him; what he saw in their faces sent the blood bounding through his veins like fire; a glance at the bluff from which the enemy were firing showed that they were beginning to waver; this swept away the last remnant of doubt as to the success of his bold and daring adventure and his spirit rose like the surge of a mighty tide. His eyes flashed with the prescience of a victory already won, and his voice was like the singing of the trumpet calling to arms:

"Go tell General Rosecrans to send me another brigade and I'll drive them to——!"

Never mind gentle reader; if he had supposed that he was going to give utterance to anything that should become historical doubtless he would have been more dainty as to the terms in which he couched the few remarks he made from time to time during the battle. But he was not thinking of anything but the fighting he had in hand at the moment—and, whatever his language, I make bold to say that it was to the point and precisely what it should have been under the circumstances and needs no sort of apology from the present writer—or if it does, shall have none!

And if you had seen the men who were following him, and had understood the significance of the aspect they showed, you would not have thought him extravagant either in the confidence that burned within him nor the words in which he voiced it. With dual vision they saw both the enemy on the bluff and "John F." tearing pell-mell to get at them; and they accepted his draft waiving notice like men who knew they had the wherewithal to meet it without delay or defalcation!

A second of time suffices sometimes to decide a great battle. The event sometimes moves with a rapidity greater than the powers of comparison can express.

The effect of the determined and headlong onset of Miller and his men communicated itself like a thrill of electricity to their adversaries, so that, whereas the Union soldiers were subjected to a tremendous fire from the rebels while they were wading across the narrow stream, yet when they got to the bluff they found that the rebels had fallen back and left them ample room for a footing.

Then begun the trial which was crucial, and upon the hazardous result of which depended everything after all. For some moments the air was white with sulphur smoke and the rattle of musketry was appalling. Surely this little band cannot resist an overwhelming force in such a duel as this? Ah! No one in the ranks of the bluecoats harbored this doubt. They were set to conquer and that without any ifs or ands or buts.

And they did! The effect produced by the charge still drove the rebels back—and after a few minutes of firing, during which the mortality was simply astounding especially among the Confederates, thickly massed together so that a bullet could scarcely fail to find a victim—the retrograde movement was resumed, and soon degenerated into a perfect rout.

The bluecoats were filled with a joy which can have no parallel in anything different! They yelled, they jumped and leaped from the ground as they pursued their flying foe; they were like men intoxicated—indeed they were drunk with the divine delirium of hardly-earned victory snatched from the yawning jaws of a terrible defeat! How they did it I cannot explain, neither, I take it, could one of the participants surviving tell you to-day, but with all their joyful antics and rapturous yelling they managed to load and fire, pouring a tremendously hot shower of shot into the rear of the Johnnies, so that they might not forget to keep on a tight run! The artillery too, upon the left bank of the river, on a spot near to that which the charging column had but just left, so soon as the rebels got far enough away from the river bank to enable them to get the range, begun to pour in such a shower of grape and canister and shot and shell as tore great chunks out of the massed solidity of the Confederates.

A funny and yet sad thing happened just here.

In the Twenty-first, among the teamsters, was "Old Button." If he ever had any other name I don't know what it was. Long service upon the Miami and Erie canal had ripened his odd nature into one of the oddest I have ever met. He was full of queer quips and cranks, quaint accomplishments and curious stories. One of his stories ended with the song of the mule. It was a favorite diversion of the idlers of the regiment to have "Old Button" go through his accomplishments, including of course the mule story with the song of that bird which he called "the mule reef" and which he gave inimitably. When Breckinridge's men had fairly got started to run, and were plainly of no mind to halt, were whipped, and badly whipped, and that too by a force only one-fourth their number, their pursuers were as we have seen almost wild with triumphant delight, the manifestation of which they could not well restrain, but gave vent to in various ways. Among those who, having felt the humiliation of Wednesday's drubbing most deeply were now most rejoiced at the favorable turn they had given to things, was a gangling, dirty, loose-jointed, tallow-faced youth, a member of Company "I;" and he turned out to be the man for the occasion. He realized perhaps more than others how useless it was to try to express the gratification they all felt by any ordinary means. And he turned it over in his mind as they ran and yelled and fired. Something extraordinary would have to be done.

At last the flash of inspiration came to him and he acted upon it without hesitation. Springing like a deer from the line of his comrades he made a most tremendous spurt till he had reached a point far in advance and yet in plain view. Here, placing his musket against a tree, he made a trumpet of his hands and bowing his back and humping his shoulders, he sent after the panic-stricken rebels such a roar of hee-haws as never before had smitten high Heaven as a pean of victory!

And then, sounding strangely enough in the midst of such dreadful business and fairly drowning the groans and shrieks of the wounded and dying, came a vast roar of laughter shaking the leaves on the trees and sending

the thick smoke hither and yon in great jolly, fleecy, rollicking waves—and the loose-jointed, tallow-faced boy became a hero, and has so remained, for in the act he was shot dead.

A rebel battery in the immediate front of our charging column gave us great trouble, and Colonel Miller, dismounting from his horse, drew his saber and led a charge upon it. If it had been supported by a million of soldiers the Seventh Brigade would have taken it! And although the rebels held its fire until, when the guns were at length discharged the men seemed blinded and scorched by the flash of its flames, it was hauled off in triumph by the Twenty-first Ohio, while at the same moment a stand of colors was captured from the enemy, by the Seventy-eighth Pennsylvania.

A mile had been traversed, perhaps, in the triumphant charge, when Miller saw evidences that he was about to encounter fresh troops. He therefore halted his men and while aligning them so as to resist the anticipated attack other brigades and divisions led by such heroes as Hazen, Hascall, and others came pouring over the stream hot and eager to finish the fight.

The battle was ended and the victory won! For that same night Bragg began his preparations to retreat and in thirty-six hours had the bulk of his army at Shelbyville, twenty-eight miles away. During Saturday and Sunday his skirmishers kept up only such a show of fighting as would suffice to keep Rosecrans from driving his (Bragg's) army to utter destruction. While nothing would have pleased his men better than to have gone forward, yet the wisdom of Rosecrans in foregoing such a movement cannot be doubted. Eight days of marching and fighting in a very rough country, amid pouring December rains and subsisting on less than half-rations all the time and corn parched on the cob and horse meat for a part of the time, having lost over twenty per cent of their number in battle (the loss in Miller's brigade was over thirty-five per cent.), worn out, and their ammunition exhausted, with thousands of rebel cavalry watching the pike over which their supplies must come, between the battlefield and Nashville, it would have been folly to

have essayed further fighting, tempting as the circumstances were.

It was a glorious victory, gloriously achieved; and we have seen as history will impartially record it some day, how and by whom it was won. No doubt other men would have fought as well as those Miller led at Stone River, had they been handled so well. And it is possible that another would have handled them as well—but the facts are as they are, and speculation cannot tarnish the laurels that were won in that great struggle. Besides—well, an old Spanish proverb comes in somewhere just about here—"Luck has a mother's love for skill!"

And I don't know that there is anything in particular the matter with that proverb.*

* In his official report General Rosecrans, after briefly referring to the fact that at 3 o'clock on Friday afternoon Breckinridge made an attack on Van Cleve and was subsequently repulsed, says significantly:

"The firing was terrific and the havoc terrible. The enemy retreated more rapidly than they had advanced. In forty minutes they lost two thousand men."

Any one who passed over the field that evening as I did, will agree with me that this statement is, if anything, below rather than above the proper figure.

At the time of making his report there was still so much confusion as to the facts in the case that the general commanding may be very readily excused for not giving the credit of the affair where it belonged; especially in view of the fact that Colonel Miller himself, in his own report, was almost criminally modest (if I may so phrase it,) in setting forth the achievements of the men he led with such a lack of color as to be almost unjust, both to him and them.

In support of my assertion that General Rosecrans did not after Wednesday's defeat contemplate taking the aggressive, at least for some time, and up to the moment of Miller's charge had not thought of it, I refer to Van Horne's "The History of the Army of the Cumberland," vol. I, p. 250. This work has peculiar value because of its having been written by the Reverend Thomas B. Van Horne, D.D., Chaplain United States Army, retired, from the official data in the War Department and under the constant advice of General George H. Thomas, who, from the day of its formation till its disbanding was the backbone and brains of the Army of the Cumberland, and who knew more of its secret and public history than any other man ever connected with it.

I am aware of the fact that Van Horne, in his two books, the one referred to above, and his "Life of General George H. Thomas," has

I have tried to give an idea of the resolute intrepidity of the men who followed and of the man who led in this charge. I have that feeling of sadness as I look over my attempt and realize its shortcomings, that any weakly limping writer must have when the conviction is forced upon him that after having labored honestly and zealously to the exhaustion of his resources he has failed to do more than to outline, dimly and imperfectly, a story which should be immortal.

When I think of these men and remember that they were Americans, the pride of nationality rises within me

given Colonel (afterward General) Miller the credit for this movement, as have also General Henry M. Cist in his work "The Army of the Cumberland," and Mr. Stevenson in his "Battle of Stone River." But the limits which those gentlemen set for themselves in writing bald history would not, of course, permit them to go into details so fully as I have tried to do. If they had essayed such fullness they would have been writing yet (supposing they had begun at the close of the war,) and would have the bulk of the glorious history of the Army of the Cumberland still in their ink bottles.

There is a trite old saying, something to the effect that you must "wait till the smoke of the conflict has cleared away" before you can get at the true facts as to its details. It is a true saying, and yet one cannot help being impatient that it should be so.

Now as to the battle of Stone River, in which from eighty to ninety thousand men were engaged, with an aggregate loss of somewhere in the neighborhood of twenty thousand, there are several facts which may be logically stated in support of the assertion made heretofore by the present writer, viz:

1. The result of the battle of Stone's River was a victory to the Union Army.

2. From the time that the two armies came squarely face to face, that is, Tuesday evening, up to Friday afternoon, the history of that struggle is a record of steady defeat for the Union Army—except in so far as certain encounters between outlying detachments on the flanks and in the rear are concerned.

3. On Friday afternoon the Union Army gained its first success, in the repulse and rout of the rebel force under Breckinridge.

4. That repulse was achieved by the 7th with the assistance of a part of the 29th Brigade—that is to say: the 78th Pennsylvania Infantry, 21st Ohio Infantry, 37th Indiana Infantry and 74th Ohio Infantry, comprising the 7th Brigade and the 19th Illinois Infantry, the 11th Michigan Infantry, a part of the 18th and a part of the 69th Ohio Infantry, regiments of the 29th Brigade.

5. That upon this, the *only* success of the Union Army during the entire contest, Bragg evacuated Murfreesboro, the objective point—the bone of contention.

and I lose myself in a dream of what my country may yet produce in the way of men.*

* Colonel Miller afterward became a brigadier-general; but in the act of gallantly leading his brigade in a charge at Liberty Gap in the following June, he was struck by a minie-ball just back of the left eye. It was thought at the time, by the surgeons, unsafe to attempt to remove the ball; and in this way the active field service of the most promising young soldier in the Union Army was terminated. He, however, commanded the Post at Nashville for a long time; and at the battle of Nashville, December, 1864, he commanded the left division numbering eight thousand men. After suffering inconceivably from his wound for twelve years—during which time he never had a moment free from pain nor a full night's rest—the ball, a solid ounce of lead, was removed, together with his eye. In 1881 General Miller became United States Senator from the State of California. He died in March, 1886, while still holding that office, in the city of Washington and his death was directly and clearly traceable to the wound received at Liberty Gap.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE DEVIL'S NAME.

WHEN the Twenty-first pulled itself together again that night, having recrossed the river with the brigade it was found that Tom was missing.

In the general rejoicing and good feeling which followed upon the victory his absence was not noted; it was natural that it should not have been since the men went back somewhat disorderly in their joyfulness, and with no care at all to keep their ranks and places as good discipline would require. Nat had missed him once or twice but as he had seen him, or thought he had seen him just after the capture of the battery alive and unharmed, he did not dream that the boy had been hurt or captured; and it was not until the dark night wore on toward midnight and Tom was not to be found nor heard of, that Nat became alarmed. Then he went to the headquarters of the brigade to seek him, and not finding him there got permission to search for him among the bodies which strewed the field for a mile beyond the stream. Taking Fielding with him he made the search.

It was a ghastly business, the handling of dead men and peering into their cold faces to find Tom's features, and nothing but the great love which the two soldiers had for the boy would have kept them up to the work, strong men as they were. More than once they encountered a spectacle which almost unnerved them and the guttering, spitting, flickering candle almost dropped from their trembling fingers.

When Tom was last seen he was in advance of the line, and the line at that moment was some rods in advance of the position subsequently taken up by the troops who

relieved Miller, these latter having fallen back somewhat to a stronger position which, during the night, they strengthened with earthworks.

At last, as day was beginning to break, Nat and Fielding returned to the company, but with no tidings good or ill for the anxious men who had remained awake all the long night, sitting about in groups, fighting the battle over again and hoping and fearing for their boy leader.

The gloom into which they were plunged when Nat and Fielding made their report may be imagined. It was 2 o'clock in the morning when Miles Bancroft, who, occupied with his duties as a member of the general staff of course had not accompanied the regiment, came to the Twenty-first and heard that Tom was missing. Gathering all the particulars as to where he was last seen, etc., he at once rode across the river and by virtue of his office having no difficulty in passing the skirmishers, made his way to the line of dead bodies which marked the extreme advance, missing Nat and Fielding who had doubtless by this time begun to work their way back.

With a flint of steel and a cotton wick he succeeded in getting light enough to examine the dead faces, but he labored long without success.

It was a work, too, that was not without its danger, since his position was between the rebel and Union lines at a point where they were not more than half a mile apart; and during his search he frequently had to fall flat and feign a death-like rigidity to avoid the notice of the ghouls who were going about rifling the pockets of the slain.

And it would have been better for him if he had never found poor Tom's body, for—but we must go back a little to tell the part of the story of which Tom's comrades knew nothing.

Tom was with the first to reach the guns of the battery. He had passed beyond them, and knowing they were safe in the hands of his comrades he gave his mind to whatever else of glory there might be to be had; for his blood was up and he was not content to rest on what had been done if there was any reasonable hope for more.

In this frame of mind he caught sight, through the smoke, of a group of graybacks, perhaps a dozen, hurrying off with a stand of colors. If to capture one of the enemy's guns is a glorious thing the taking of his colors is much more so, and at the sight of the streaming flags Tom's mouth watered. Glancing about he found himself surrounded by a half-dozen men, strangers to him, but wearing blue uniforms. This satisfied him, and without stopping to ask questions he bade them follow him. They responded with ardor and set after the prize like race horses.

A stern chase is proverbially a long one; and in their excitement they soon passed beyond the reach of succor, which seeing, the rebels turned, two to one of Tom's party, and gave them a volley, which prostrated two of the bluecoats. Then with a shrill yell they rushed upon the remaining four, who had but empty guns and Tom's sword to defend themselves with. The bluecoats fought desperately, but unavailingly and soon all were stretched bleeding upon the earth. Tom was simultaneously thrust through the chest by a bayonet and felled to the earth by a blow from the butt of a musket which crashed as if every bone in the back part of his head had been broken to atoms.

The victors were then about to plunder the bodies when, seeing that Tom was an officer and therefore likely to be a richer "find" than his humbler companions, a burly fellow dragged him to a clump of bushes standing nearby that he might go through him more at leisure and free from observation; but just as he got the body there a troop of cavalry came by and he was ordered to hasten back to his regiment.

And there the boy lay through the bitter night, his blood flowing and dripping from his wounds and saturating the soil which received him so inhospitably, till the cold and the natural coagulation contracted and plugged up the dreadful holes.

It was long after midnight when a boy—or what seemed to be a boy—passing through the rebel lines came creeping down among the bodies lying on the field. The figure went noiselessly about, and a fitful gleaming now

and again showed the light of a "slide" or "bull's-eye" lantern which not only served to illuminate the faces of the dead and wounded, but to guide the footsteps in moments of obscurity. From one form to the other it passed, giving little heed to the motionless, but ministering from a canteen at times to the writhing ones. The hands that lifted the fevered heads were cool and soft, and the voice which said "Drink!" tinkled with the melody of rippling waters. But beyond the monosyllable, the visitor was silent and uttered no word.

At last the little group of those who had fallen with Tom was reached, and here the figure paused with a start of surprise as the glare of the lantern showed the blue clothing. So far, only the Confederate uniform had met the eye, and it was clearly not expected that bluecoats should have been found so far in advance.

Pondering over this circumstance, the figure stood with the light of the lantern turned full towards the Union lines, oblivious to danger till the whistling of a ball nearby and the report of a skirmisher's musket gave warning. Instantly closing the slide the boy sprang to the clump of bushes beneath which Tom lay and stood motionless.

Along the line of both armies the skirmishers banged away at random or at the weird phantoms springing from the darkness at them as they strained their eyeballs out of their sockets trying to pierce the gloom. A voice here and there shouted an order in a muffled tone, and then all was silent again.

The boy was about to draw away with a sigh of relief, when a groan, almost at his feet, made him start with surprise. Tom's figure, in his dark uniform, made but a black blotch upon the ground.

"Water! Water! My God, Ethel, will you not give me a drink of water!"

There was that startling strength and emphasis in the clear, tense tone in which the demand was made that would have made any man on earth jump. The effect on the boy standing motionless there was electrical.

"God in heaven, who can that be?"

And trembling fingers falteringly drew the slide again

and the light flashed upon Tom's pale face. With a shriek the startled intruder fell by his side and eager lips covered him with kisses.

"Oh, my brave, handsome boy! Is it you? Is it you? Oh, he is dying—see"—and she lifted her hands from his chest and saw them in the light covered with blood—"see—he is dying!"

"Water, Ethel, water!" groaned the writhing wretch.

"Yes, yes! I forgot! Forgive me"—and the cool water gurgled from the canteen as he drank it eagerly.

"Oh, Tom, are you much hurt? Oh, my darling! How did you know I was here?" and she wrung her hands and rocked to and fro as if bereft of her senses. But Tom made no answer except to roll his head uneasily from side to side.

"I *knew* it—I knew something was drawing me here to-night; but I did not dream of this! My brave, handsome, gentle boy! I might have known that you would have outstripped them all—my lion—my hero!"

The tears were coursing down her cheeks like rain.

"Oh, my head—my head—Ethel, you *do* love me?"

"Yes—yes—yes—what am I thinking of?"

And she raised his head and strove to place his haversack under it; but he groaned in such agony as she did so that she was compelled to desist.

"Merciful heavens! He is wounded from head to foot! I might have known it! My brave boy! He would never yield!"

"Oh, my head—my head—oh, the pain!"

"Yes—yes—dear! What am I thinking of?"

And by the light she drew a vial filled with a dark liquid from her pocket, and poured its contents down his throat. He gasped and struggled, but swallowed it.

"Yes—yes—it will do you good! A little hard to take maybe, but here's water! There! There! Darling! It will drive away the pain—it will give you rest! What shall I do? What shall I do?" and again she fell to moaning and rocking and wringing her hands.

The draught she had given him was a powerful opiate under the influence of which Tom soon became calm and unconscious. So quiet was he that she sought the

beating of his heart under his blood-stiffened coat, and when she found it so feebly fluttering she became alarmed.

"I have killed him! When I only meant to help him!"

But a heavy sigh from the sleeping boy reassured her. She crept closely up to his side, and laid her face by his and stained her cheeks and lips with his blood, and thus remained and prayed for an hour.

Then she was roused by a sharp click, click, click, and raising her head saw a man blowing what seemed to be a feeble spark of fire in his hand, as he bent over a dead body. He was not twenty feet away, and she gently rose and slipped behind the bushes.

The man went patiently from body to body, but evidently without success in his search. Then he paused, looming up silent and grewsome against the dark horizon. Then, as if he had made up his mind to sit down and wait for daylight, he advanced to the knoll upon which the clump of bushes were, and sat down.

In doing so he laid his hand full upon Tom's face; whereupon he sprang up as if he had been shot.

"Here's another one!" he said; and then click, click, click, he worked away with his flint and steel, and then with his breath till his cotton wick glowing, gave light enough for his purpose.

"At last!" he said. "At last! But he's dead! Poor fellow!"

And his hand explored his wounded chest and head. "Yes, he's dead! Stabbed and clubbed to death! She will break her heart!"

At this he felt the boy's pulse, and started as if surprised. Then, through the blood, he sought his heart.

"No, he's not! Why, no! He's warm, and his heart beats! Tom? Tom? Old fellow wake up! Don't you know me?"

But Tom slept on, thanks to the opiate. Then with more deliberation the wounds were once more examined.

"But he can't live! I shan't tell her. She will hate the man who brings her the news! And she must not hate me! I promised to watch over him, and to give her news of him—how could she ask me to do that when she knows how I love her! And he loved her! Why did

she ensnare *him*? A man is all very well—but a boy! This is the second time he has crossed my path—but it matters not! *This love is my life*; and he shall not thwart me! Indeed, how can he, now? He cannot survive these terrible wounds!”

And for a moment he sat buried in thought. The woman in boy's clothes lay not three feet from him and strove to quiet the beating of her heart lest he should hear it. All at once he started, and in the darkness bent his gaze upon the unconscious boy.

“But suppose he should not die? Suppose, spite of all these wounds, he should get well?”

He put his ear over Tom's heart to listen to its flutterings.

“No—it beats fainter and fainter! He will die; and then she will love me, and me only!”

Tom moved uneasily and groaned and raised his hand and let it fall again. By a strong effort the woman restrained her impulse to go to him. The man started.

“But he is strong and *may* live! If he does—if he does, she will love him! Curse him, she loves him now—boy as he is! But he must die—he must—I will—but no—I must not think of that! What is the matter with me!”

He rose and walked away a pace or two. Then he stood pondering. Once or twice he started toward Tom, and then checked himself. Finally, with the air of a man who had made up his mind, he drew a flask from his pocket, held it to his lips for a long time, replaced it, and then with a step reached the boy and knelt beside him.

“Yes, I must make sure of it! There will be no crime in it! It is only a matter of an hour or so, anyhow! And it will only save him pain! If I don't do it I may never be certain that he is dead! I never dreamed of such a thing before—but—I love her—and——”

He quietly placed his strong hands about Tom's throat and began to slowly compress it. The boy writhed and moaned like one choking. The man muttered an oath and evidently tightened his grip, when, sudden as the flash of a gun in the dark, a glare of hot light smote his eyes and sent him to his feet in terror.

"Miles Bancroft, what would you do?"

"Who—who—who are you? Stand back or I'll fire!"
and he drew his revolver.

She gave no heed to his threat.

"If you do, turn the muzzle against your own breast—for for this night you will live accursed by your own heart!"

"My God! It is Ethel! I thought you were in Nashville!"

"Humph!" Cold and contemptuous beyond description. His voice took on a tone of begging appeal.

"How came you here?"

"A friend—no a *thing*—a would-be murderer of a helpless boy furnished me a pass from General Rosecrans two weeks ago—to go through the lines at any time unchallenged!"

"I know I did—but——"

"Oh! You acknowledge the description!"

"But when did you come here?"

"I have been in Murfreesboro for four days!"

"In Murfreesboro?"

"In Murfreesboro!"

"How did you pass the rebel lines?"

"I need no pass to get into the *rebel* lines, as you call them!"

"Ah! Then you are a spy!"

This time *he* sought to speak contemptuously.

"I suppose I am what an *honorable* man like you would call a spy! I serve the South—because I love her—and I *hate* the North!"

"And the information you got from me——"

"Was useful, very useful to General Bragg!"

"What a fool I have been!"

"I knew you were a fool—but I had no idea that you were a *coward* as well!"

"These are strong words!"

"Yes! The man who would murder his helpless friend is a coward!"

"You shall not talk to me so."

"No?"

"I will arrest you—I *do* arrest you as a spy!"

"Very well! I'll go with you to—to General Rosecrans! And I will acknowledge to him that I am a spy!"

"They will hang you!"

"Yes, I presume you chivalric Northerners would not hesitate to hang a woman! But before they hang me—I don't care, I'm ready to die for the South—before they hang me do you know what I will do?"

"What you will do?"

"Yes! I will show General Rosecrans sundry letters I have from Colonel Miles Bancroft, and copies of orders and reports furnished me by this same *gallant* colonel!"

"You are a devil!"

"You are courteous, and *very* polite!"

"You have deceived me!"

"Of course I have!"

"But I love you, Ethel; my God, you have made me what I am!" and he fell on his knees and buried his face in his hands. She flamed with indignation.

"Don't dare to say that! I may have made you a fool—that is my business—but I could never make you the base *thing* that you are!"

"You made me love you—you drew me on—you made me believe that you loved me——"

"Of course I did!"

"You are a fiend! You cannot love! You have no heart!"

"You do not speak the truth! I wish you did! There lies a boy for whom I would give my life! The only human being I ever did love! Oh, my brave, gentle boy! Why did you come to me with your sweet, innocent, honest heart? Why did not something warn you? Ah! I would die for you!"

And she hung over him and wept, and trembled with emotion.

"He! That boy! You are old enough to be his mother!"

"I know I am! I know I am! I know everything! I know that I have deceived him, too—but the temptation was too great! I tried to fight against it but could not! I never met a human being so brave and gentle and chivalric and loving as he is! And he loved me so purely

—and my life has been so bitter! Why should I refuse this little bit of happiness! God pity me!”

She fell prone upon her face and sobbed aloud.

“And you preferred him to me?”

“Ay! and do!” she cried, springing to her feet. “I would not give one drop of his poor blood soaking into the earth there, for your whole body, your life, your soul!”

“Ethel, listen to me! He cannot live! He must die!” She faced him defiantly. “No, I don’t mean that! He will die of his wounds! I know you love him—but I used to think you loved me, too, a little! I am *not* a bad man! As God is my witness I had no thought till a moment ago of—of—of doing what you saw me doing! Listen to me! I love you more than I do my life, my soul, my hope of salvation! I can make you happy! Come with me. After what has happened to-night neither of us can remain here. I will resign. We will leave the country and go away where no one knows us and be happy. I beg as a man would for his life!”

“Never! You are a coward and a murderer!” She threw her arm out with a superb gesture of disdain and pointed toward the Union camp. “Go!”

“I will not leave you—you are more to me than my honor!” With another gesture she flung him off. “Very well. If I cannot live with you and for you, I will die by your side,” and his revolver was at his breast.

She grasped it, and strove to take it away from him.

“You must not! You may yet make atonement! Miles! Miles!” she cried as she still struggled with him. “dear Miles, if you love me!”

“If I love you, what?” he demanded, hoarsely.

“Do not kill yourself!”

“But I cannot live without you!”

“But perhaps——”

“Do you mean——”

“That you may make atonement!”

“And having done that, you will love me?”

She smiled, wearily and painfully, upon him.

“You must not kill yourself”—he turned away impatiently—“you must live—for my sake.”

He turned and clasped her in his arms, and kissed her face and hair till she was breathless and sick.

"Go!" she said.

"I will live—for your sake! You would not have said it if you did not love me! Is it not so?"

"Go!"

He once more embraced her passionately, and then, turning, he fled swiftly toward the Union lines.

The clock in the steeple in the distant town boomed the hour, slowly and heavily, one! two! three! four!

The woman watched him in the deep gloom till he disappeared, when with a sigh she lost consciousness.

When she came back to life her cheek was against poor Tom's; the rain was falling and the gray streaks in the east told that the day was breaking.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CLOCK STRIKES FOUR.

MEANTIME Lawyer Jordan had changed his views relative to the war between the North and the South, and had pretty well succeeded in regaining position as a leader among men in and about Clayton and the congressional district to which Shawnee County belonged. Not to put too fine a point on it he had realized, before Nat and Tom and Miles had rescued him from the mob in the market-house, that he had taken the wrong chute, that things were dead against him and his kind, that the wave of events had swept the sand from under the old ideas and theories upon which he had built his political structure and that it behooved him to set about adapting himself to the new order of things; with all speed, unquestionably; and such grace as might be, certainly.

Having carefully estimated the value of his retirement from public life day by day and having taken his bearings with such accuracy as his frightened condition would permit, he at length, after some weeks of seclusion, ventured forth and timidly reconnoitered his accustomed haunts. He sought the company of his fellows, not with the flauntings of the banner of his own pride in himself, nor the blare of the trumpet of his own self-esteem, but rather in that apologetic and deprecating tone and attitude which he thought would be most likely to win him favor to begin with—at least conciliate public opinion till he should have time to newly recommend himself. Toward his old friends and fellow-sinners his conduct was judicious in the extreme and his example was of great weight. Even the most stubborn among them with the added and powerful assistance of the Dutch courage

that came, in those days, in a sea-green flat glass bottle and shone with a pale straw color could not get him back upon the old platform. He solemnly assured them in the secret conclaves which they held from time to time in his back office, that they had been wrong; that the South was wrong and the North was right; at least, whether this was true or not, he would never again be guilty of the error of going against the sentiments of his near neighbors at so important a crisis.

At first it was hard lines with him; the people distrusted him; and it almost broke his heart to have a big, serious fellow take him aside occasionally and quietly intimate to him that if he ever spoke treason again the hand of the mob would not be stayed a second time—and this sort of warning came to him with disagreeable frequency. The boys on their way to school, whom he had never wasted regard upon before, passed him, he could not help seeing, with contemptuous and even defiant glances; while the larger girls, just getting into Latin and long dresses to whom he had always been condescendingly gallant, ignored him with little, but still clearly perceptible sniffs of disdain. His practice at the bar picked up very slowly; the preacher was humane but none the less stern in his disapproval; the caucuses and township meetings and county conventions of his party no longer welcomed his appearance with the stamping of cowhide boots and the clapping of horny palms; and a few days after the news had come of the battle at Bull Run, while standing in front of the bar in the village tavern, he felt the cold eye of the barkeeper upon him; and he sadly thought as he gazed into his glass that even his whisky had gone back on him, so much had it failed of its usual effect—whereat, surely, his cup of bitterness was full—and he groaned that his punishment was greater than he could bear!

But time is a great healer, and patient perseverance on the part of the lawyer in his public and private repentance for his offense, brought him solace; and men reconsidered their first and bitter judgments, and by the time he had gone to work making recruiting speeches and in other ways helping the cause they began to think that

they ought to be easier with him, and let him in once more among them. And they did so.

And he worked with chastened zeal and did some good work, too. So much so that, under the influence of one of his own eloquent speeches on behalf of the Union, he rashly declared his purpose to enlist himself; and forthwith applied for a commission; and the governor, realizing the importance of such a recruit from a part of the State peculiar for its disloyalty to the Union cause, made swift haste to create him colonel of the Four hundred and seventy-second Regiment. This was in the latter part of 1862, when it was a work of some weeks to get a regiment together; instead of days, as at the beginning of the war.

But the fact that Lawyer Jordan had decided to go to war at once swept away all lingering prejudice against him, at least to all outward appearance; and he was received, when on the evening of the 29th of December, he came up from Columbus where his regiment lay awaiting orders, with great enthusiasm and the village brass band. Of course his response to the noble efforts of the ambitious musicians was in a lofty key as became a great inspiration; and the news that Rosecrans had moved out to give battle to Bragg offered the new colonel in his fresh and unsoiled uniform a theme of no small size and which he improved, we may be sure for all that it was worth; eliciting almost unbounded enthusiasm as he declared his hope that the authorities at Washington would order the gallant Four hundred and Seventy-second to Murfreesboro; which place he only feared, would be in the hands of the other brave fellows whom the fortunes of war had sent in advance, before he and his men could get there.

And the gallant colonel affirmed, an hour later, while surrounded by an enthusiastic circle, that the whisky before him that night was "something like the real old stuff—that it had been so bad for awhile back that he had begun to think he never would taste the genuine article again!"

We have been so busy fighting and marching and falling in love and doing and sinning down at the front,

that we have not had time to note the changes in Clayton; which improvements comprised among others a telegraph office and a branch railroad from Bryan's. By means of the former, meager rumors of battles and skirmishes could be got from time to time during the day, while, by means of the evening train on the latter, the city morning dailies could be had in time for scanning at the supper-table. In other respects, too, Clayton was improving her condition; manufacturing establishments were springing up, and the town was growing in size; and out at the northwestern corner of the village limits was a long, low building which had a peculiar fascination for the boys and a sad significance to women clad in mourning; for it was a factory wherein the black walnut so abundant in the adjacent woods was being turned into hundred of gunstocks daily—but of these things we have no time to talk at present—if we ever will have.

Nobody was more zealous in doing all manner of things possible in a non-combatant, to uphold the hands of the government and strengthen the hearts of the soldiers and comfort their families left behind to wrestle with Providence for a living, than the old judge. His great wealth gave him the means to do much; and where a mortgage on a farm kept a stout young man from volunteering the judge's money lifted it; and when fear for the daily supplies for the family kept a brave man chafing at home the judge's money bade him godspeed to the front. In every possible way the old man gave his help; and when he sometimes thoughts of how he was diminishing the fortune that he had hoped to leave to Margaret and the brave man whom he had consented she should marry when the war should be over—for this *was* the explanation of the blithe content which Tom had marked in Miles Bancroft—he was proud to think that his noble girl and the patriotic soldier would not grudge the money so spent.

Among the least of his givings was the grant of his public hall, St. Cecilia's, for the free and sole use of the Women's Soldiers' Aid Society; and here every Friday evening the wives and mothers and sweethearts of the men at the front gathered to sew garments and make bandages and scrape lint.

These meetings were of the deepest interest; since, if there was any great news going it could be satisfactorily discussed here in public; if not, there were a hundred letters, received during the week, containing items of the incidents of camp and campaign life to be read, in paragraphs, and thus made a part of the public information. Of course there were extraordinary occasions when the news of a great battle brought together in the hall an aggregation of anxiety which, curiously enough, seemed to grow lighter as it was thus aggregated and shared by all. As a rule there was nothing attempted of a more imposing nature in the way of public exercises than to hear the reports of committees and read the requisitions made from time to time upon the Clayton Aid Society by the State organization or the Sanitary Commission; but on an extraordinary occasion, such as has been referred to, it was a relief to find in one common mouthpiece a vent for the feelings which individuals strove to restrain. And in a community suddenly changed as Clayton had been, from the most repressive to the most sensitive in this great emergency, the necessity for some such relief was imperative and would not be denied. Not that speechmaking, in the nature of buncombe, was ever wanted; but there was a satisfaction to be found in a genuine voicing of the general feeling, and unquestionably great comfort in having the direction of affairs taken authoritatively in hand by somebody.

Now the Clayton Aid Society had for its president a woman who was certainly predestined and foreordained for her work. She was known to every man, woman, child and dog in the village as Aunt Eliza. She was not so known because of her great age, for she was but little more than fifty, but because her active life of benevolence and charity (and a decent fortune gave her means to so indulge herself), and helpfulness to all who were poor or sick or in distress, had made her known and loved of all. She was untiring at the bed of sickness where no one else was so welcome; she was ever on the alert to feed and clothe the unfortunate, and in doing this she never made the recipient of her bounty feel the slightest twinge of shame or humiliation; she was a widow with

an only son, a sturdy manly fellow of twenty or thereabouts, a member of Company "Q" of the Twenty-first, where he had gone with her proud blessing. She was of two ideas above all others, viz.: that the slaves in the South should be freed, and that the sale of intoxicating beverages should be prohibited by law; and while she never unsexed herself, she preached and enforced her views at all suitable times and in all proper places without fear or hesitation. She had been known to go boldly into the lowest groggery of the village to rescue a victim and restore him to his family and to do it without the slightest fear of the insult which another, and a weaker, woman would have met with, but which never dared affront her. With the manners of a gracious queen, and the firmness and intrepidity of the bravest man, she had not an enemy in all the world and her heart was kept warm with good deeds.

The daily papers had kept Clayton advised meagerly of the advance of the Army of the Cumberland as it slowly moved out after Bragg, and the people were, of course, filled with anxiety and apprehension, growing as time went on. On Thursday, the 1st of January, the telegraph gave vague hints of an awful battle near Murfreesboro—which the daily papers Thursday night confirmed, with but little more in the way of details than the mournful statement that the result had been disastrous to the Union arms. On Friday the telegraph was almost dumb; but the news in the papers Friday night was so appalling that Clayton went supperless and the hall was filled with pale faces and trembling hearts. In the news the worst that had befallen Rosecrans, bad as it was, was exaggerated; and the readers were forced to the conclusion that the Army of the Cumberland had been not only badly whipped, but practically wiped out of existence. "Bad news flies fast;" and while it is true that the facts as to the battle were not fully known until many days after it had been fought, yet it is also true that the air was filled with the darkness of horrible disaster long before anything authentic could be had.

It had been announced that Colonel Jordan would speak at the meeting of the Aid Society that night. The

opportunity to do so had not been altogether unsought by the new hero; he could not at once give over his liking for such prominence, and he wanted to show himself in his brave regimentals and to take leave of his old friends and acquaintances in a harangue of such stout eloquence as would win admiration and testify his courageous and necessarily bloody purposes. Arriving in Clayton Tuesday evening, he spent Wednesday in arranging his business, and Thursday in going about among the friends he was to leave so soon. In the intervals of business and friendly intercourse he conned his speech, which he was minded should be electrical in its effect. Under the circumstances, posing as a hero before the admiring eyes of a great audience, mostly women, and in his uniform with the shoulder-straps and brass buttons, standing under the great flag draped over the president's stand, he felt that it could be scarcely less than electrical and thrilling to a degree.

Thursday's news somewhat disturbed the free flow of his thoughts, while Friday's reduced him to an extremely unpleasant state of nervousness. He repented him that he had sought this publicity; it would have been better to have gone quietly off, perhaps.

Still, he must go through with it, and he would. Who could tell? Could he not recall numbers of instances when nervousness and a sinking heart were but the preludes to tremendous success upon the stump? Certainly! Anyhow, on the stage in St. Cecilia's Hall he would be in no bodily peril—and he would not think of the bloody news.

But ah, he must think of it. Ay, and he would be expected to talk of it too. Great heavens! what a cruel thing war is! Thousands of men slaughtered, and Rosecrans routed! What if he should be ordered down there? The governor thought he would be sent down to Lexington, Kentucky, to garrison the town; that's what they ought to do with a green regiment, anyhow. Give the men time to drill, before you push them into battle.

But if Rosecrans had really been routed—then of course they would hurry troops down to him, and the Four hundred and Seventy-second would have to go, too.

It was a very uncomfortable frame of mind to be in; and all the whisky he could get wouldn't help it. But he must do his best. And the committee sent to escort him to the hall were forced to take two drinks with him before they could get him out of his house.

His spirits were refused even the poor encouragement of applause when he entered the hall. The people had something too weighty on their souls to permit of applause. And the apprehension and shuddering fear with which the atmosphere was burdened, entered his poor, craven heart and it sank like lead.

Upon being introduced he strove to collect himself and his eyes wandered over the crowd, mechanically. He began in a tone so loud that it frightened him, and he saw, jarred upon the feelings of the people. But his memory stood him in good stead, and as he rolled off one sentence after the other about the sacredness of the cause and the mighty majesty of the nation and the hellish depravity of the South and the high and holy duty—duty?—nay, privilege of the citizen; and warmed to his work as he reminded them of the sweetness and decorousness of dying for one's country, he really began to think that he would succeed after all. It was discouraging, in truth, that the people did not warm up, that their eyes did not lose the haggard look of dread, that their countenances were still preoccupied and rigid, but he gathered hope. He would try them still more eloquently, and he adroitly wove in an allusion to the flag, "Forever float that standard sheet"—when his quick eye caught sight of a boy with a yellow envelope in his hand elbowing his way through the crowd. It was a telegraphic message! And doubtless for him! Never mind! Courage!

"Yes, my fellow-citizens! In the language of the sublime poet:

"Forever float that standard sheet,"

the boy reached the desk—

"Where breathes the foe but falls before us?"

he opened the envelope mechanically and read the message—

“Where breathes the foe——”

The paper fell from his trembling fingers on the desk beneath the eye of Aunt Eliza—

“but falls—before—us—
but—falls——”

Aunt Eliza read the message—it was signed by the adjutant-general:

“Rosecrans routed—your regiment ordered at once to Nashville. Come immediately!”

“Where breathes—the foe—but falls—before us—”

his fingers strove with the rigid upright collar of his coat, his eyes wandered, his voice failed, and his knees seemed sinking. Aunt Eliza in sore amaze rose quickly, and placing a hand on his bosom pressed him into a chair.

“Sit down, colonel! You’re—you’re sick! Sit down! Your clothes are new, and—and—you haven’t got used to them yet—and they make you uncomfortable!”

The tone was meant to be kindly, but how could she keep all of her contempt back? As the colonel sat down she turned to the silent crowd—her mien was collected and her low calm, voice sought out the furthest corner of the room:

“My friends, you have all heard the news; we don’t know all of the truth yet; but we know enough; we know that we have a duty to perform; and we must do it! I’m not talking to the men; this is the place for women to work; that’s what we are here for. To scrape lint and make bandages and garments for our brave ones at the front. We must not stop to wonder what has become of them—where they are to-night. My boy is there, somewhere”—and the voice trembled—“I don’t know where—but he is there. He is there—and I would not have him elsewhere for the world! He may be—may be—lying there—dead! With his dear face turned up

rigid and cold and gray"—and the tears *would* come, and she bowed her head while the hall was filled with women's moans and the groans of strong men. But for only a moment—dashing her hand across her eyes she raised her face quickly. "But if he is, I am proud of it! If he is dead he has died fighting God's battles, and he has placed a crown on his poor, weak mother's head and I thank God for him! If he is lying there wounded and suffering, God's angels will minister unto him. And he won't ask anything more of them than strength to bear his pain like a man—God bless him! This is no time for tears and hysterics. The moments are too precious; we must not lose one. And now let us go to work without another word. The men can go home; we will stay and work. That's what we must do—work!"

"And pray!" said a voice from the floor.

"Not now, Sister Druett; not now! We will work now, and pray when we get home! Don't you know that every moment the brave fellows are thinking of their wives and mothers and sisters? We must work!"

The poor sweethearts, is nothing to be said for them?

"Does she think the mothers and wives and sisters are the only ones who suffer? Sisters indeed!" And a flush stole into Margaret's pale face, as she bent her head resolutely to her work.

The men crept silently out and stood about in groups in the street below. In the hall the work went on almost noiselessly, save for the low-spoken word of instruction and reply occasionally, and now and again the quickly suppressed sigh which was very near to a hysterical gasp. And when, at midnight, they parted to go to their homes, they went quietly.

Little Mrs. Susie kissed Margaret and whispered softly but confidently:

"I feel sure that he is safe—somehow I am sure of it."

"Oh, do you? I wish I could feel so. I am so much afraid—why should I be? Oh, Susie, he is not my husband yet, but I could not love him more if he were—and I had a letter from him yesterday, so loving and true, and yet there was such a sad tone to it—I cannot help feeling anxious——"

"It is natural; but Nat is so big and strong you know—" and they were separated by the crowd, and each went her way.

Susie, to her bed, where lay little Rosy with Dick in his crib near by. The little girl's soft pink hands were clasped over her breast as if she were praying, while Dick with head thrown back and brown, chubby fists clinched, had the dauntless look of the father. Somehow it struck Susie that this was all as it should be, and rousing her maid-of-all-work who had gone to sleep on her post, she sent her off to bed. Then turning the light down so that it gave but a soft, warm glow, she knelt by her darlings and thanked God that the dear brave husband and father had been spared; with the utmost confidence that it was so. And then she fell asleep like a child.

Margaret, to creep to her home cold and sick at heart and filled with the torture of her fears and vague and awful doubts. The judge kissed her kindly and pityingly as he bade her good-night; for wrestle as she might with her agony she could not hide it all from his keen, loving eyes.

To her pillow alone did she at first open her heart and for hours she wept and sighed her sorrows there. Then she prayed—prayed as she never had prayed before and wrestled as did Jacob for the blessing. Her faith grew with her prayers, each moment stronger and brighter, till at last she rose to her feet and sought her father's bedside with a song of rejoicing in her heart.

"Father, father, wake up! I have news—I must tell you!"

The old man sprang up in alarm.

"Why, Margaret, daughter, what is it? Are you ill?"

"No, father, I am well. I have come to tell you good news," and standing like an angel robed in white by his couch she told how she had been tortured with fears and doubts and how she had prayed till at last the assurance had come to her from Heaven that Miles had passed safe and unscathed through the battle. And then in the glow of this unwonted feeling that had come over her she went on to tell the old man of the letter that had come

from him, repeating in her delirium of delight the fond messages he had sent which showed how loving and true and noble a man he was. It was not strange that the father was at first alarmed, and that he strove so hard to soothe and quiet her, for never before to any human being had she spoken so freely and unreservedly. And he almost trembled as at last he kissed her brow and sent her from him, and he sighed, he knew not why, as she noiselessly passed out into the hall, going to her own room.

She paused in the hall to listen to the old clock on the landing as it struck, echoing through the quiet house, one, two, three, four! Somehow the sound only added to her lightness of heart and she, too, fell asleep smiling.

The booming from the Murfreesboro steeple at the same moment filled the ears of Miles Bancroft as he crept over the battlefield, like a guilty thing flying from crime!

CHAPTER XX.

“HE TRIED TO CHOKE ME TO DEATH.”

WHAT were all the glories of the great victory to Nat, so long as the fate of his boy-captain was shrouded in so much mystery? So long, too, as all that was known of Tom only gave warrant for the gravest inferences?

The great-hearted fellow went about like a giant whose soul had gone out of him, so to speak; leaving his physical economy still working, mechanically, but no longer instinct with the divine essence. The love he bore the boy was so great a portion of his very life! Away back, as we have seen, in the early days, he unconsciously cultivated a love for Tom; they had enough in common and yet were sufficiently dissimilar to make a strong feeling of mutual regard natural. They were alike in that they were brave and daring without an atom of vanity or love of noisy approbation; they were alike in that they abhorred all manner of shams and false pretense, differing in that it was Tom's habit to pass such things by without deigning remark, while Nat was accustomed to inveigh more or less loudly and violently against them; they were unlike in that Tom said little while Nat was more voluble—but whether Tom's reticence or Nat's shrewd observations were the more admirable was a question; Tom liked Nat because, while he was his superior in years Nat always showed him a quiet deference which was grateful; Nat loved Tom because he could not help it, and admired him as an extraordinary being. Tom knew he could always rely on Nat, and Nat was proud to follow Tom and back him up in anything he might essay. Each act of Tom's military career increased the pride and affection which Nat felt for him; there never was

such a boy, he thought; "he would give even 'old John F.' a tight rub if their ages were the same!" Words could not express more!

And then, you know, the man you mess with and bunk with and fight side by side with for months growing into years, must, if he do not become utterly hateful to you, find his way into your heart to stay there so long as life endures.

It needs not to be said then, understanding all this, that Nat spared no effort to find his mate. For days and weeks, by special permission, he scoured the battlefield and prowled among the hospitals, even going back to Nashville to search among the wounded there, and visiting every house and tent and camp along the pike leading to that city, and finally penetrating as far as he could into the enemy's country—but though every facility was given him he found no trace of the boy except his sword and cap which lay on the field where he fell.

No one had seen him after the capture of the battery. The men who were with him were killed; he had disappeared as completely as if the earth had opened up and swallowed him.

Miles Bancroft made no report of what he had seen. Perhaps the statement is superfluous. He went about his duties with a renewed zeal and earnestness after the battle, and won fresh and high appreciation. He was but little changed; except that whereas he had once been abstemious, and companionable to those he liked, he had now grown more and more fond of an occasional glass of whisky, and was more reserved and less talkative and genial. Still, he was far from being a tippler and was not at all morose. The change in him, when it was observed at all, was attributed to commendable ambition.

But I am talking of that which only weeks and months sufficed to accomplish in Miles. He came frequently enough to the regiment to keep up his relations with the Clayton boys, but he did not cultivate them, any more than he did when he first dropped into the village, years before.

And so weeks lapsed into months, and Tom was still

carried on the rolls as "missing;" till at last everybody except Nat gave him up as lost, and the governor commissioned Nat to be captain in Tom's stead, and Nat very reluctantly took the place; not that he would admit that Tom was dead, but he consented to step into his friend's shoes only to keep a stranger from assuming them.

"He'll turn up some day, and then I'll step out and give him his place again; it stands to reason that he isn't dead; because—because—well, because if the Lord's on our side, and the chaplain says in his sermons that He is, and old Rosy says so in his official report—only Rosy says it in Latin, but it means the same thing—if the Lord's on our side, and the weight of the testimony is in favor of that view of it, why, He isn't a-going to throw away as good a soldier as Tom Bailey, quite so early in the game! Good soldiers ain't quite so plenty as all that, and nobody knows it better'n the Lord!"

This doctrine gave great comfort to Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy, who had attached himself with a swift affection to Tom. He was a pessimistic ducky in some things, and did not fully share Nat's faith, but he was eager to clutch at any shadow of hope. He was a singular compound of truth and falsehood, honesty and venality, ignorance and shrewdness, boldness and cowardice; but his affections were warm and clinging and faithful as is usual with his race; and Tom had been kind to him and had won his heart completely.

It was on a warm, bright day in May, that Nat, lying at ease smoking in his tent, gazing through the open fly down the vista of the company street to the softly wooded hills a mile or two away, became suddenly possessed of an idea; and at once a plan to find Tom flashed into completeness.

"'Curg, you Baptist hoodoo, come here!"

The rattle of pots and pans in the kitchen tent in the rear ceased at once, as did also the melodious whistling of one of those weird airs only heard among the negroes of the South and which I have always thought must have come with their ancestors from the wilds of Africa so barbarous and strangely thrilling are they; and 'Curg presented himself grinning.

"Wasn't de coffee strong 'nuff dish yer mawnin', mass' capt'n?"

"Yes; never mind the coffee; I've got an errand for you to do; go put on your coat."

"Yessah!"

In a moment he was back again, clad in a butternut suit, from top to toe—the spoils of the battlefield.

"You look like a colonel of cavalry! Got any money?"

"No, sah—hain't been paid foh a yeah!"

"What a liar you are! Well, here's twenty silver dollars; hide them away among your clothes so they won't jingle."

"Yes, sah, dar dey is! I'se gwine foh ter buy a coat wid brass buttons and shoulder-straps, de fust thing!"

"You're going to do nothing of the sort. You're going to find Captain Tom!"

"De good Lawd!"

"That's the size of it; go down toward Shelbyville a few miles, and then cut off in a southeasterly direction, toward McMinnville—d'ye understand?"

"Does ye really mean foh me ter go, cappen?"

"I certainly do!"

"Right straight away off?"

"At once?"

The darky's face was very sober, and his voice had taken serious depth. He stood looking away off at the horizon for a little time, while Nat watched him narrowly. At last he turned slowly:

"Who's gwine ter cook foh ye, while I'se gone?"

The last doubt was removed from Nat's mind. He laughed inwardly but his face was quiet and earnest.

"Nobody; I'm not going to eat anything till you bring Captain Tom back."

"De good Lawd! Well, good-by, Mass' Cappen! I mus' be movin' 'long!"

"You can get through the picket-line, can't you?"

"Dey's got ter be mighty smart ef I don't!"

"How soon will I hear from you?"

"Soon's I find de young cappen! Not befoah!"

"You'll bring him back?"

"Ef he's in de lan' ob de libin', I will; an' ef he's dead I'll bring you de word!"

"Well, good-by, 'Curg!"

"Good-by!" and he started off down the road, whistling. Nat stood looking after him. All at once he stopped and turned:

"I say, cappen," he yelled.

"Well?"

"You'se gwine to git pow'ful hongry befoah ye heahs from me! Yah! Yah!"

"Well, maybe I will!"

The darcy was still standing, pondering.

"I say, cappen," he shouted again.

"Well?"

"I'll send ye word by a nigga once-twin-er-while!"

"All right—good—say, come here!"

The darcy retraced his steps.

"Wherever you hear of any pretty women in the neighborhood, you look into things mighty sharp; do you understand?"

"Yes, sah!" A pause. "You don't think de young cappen would a run off after a purty woman, does ye?"

"No! But a pretty woman would run after him; especially if he was wounded; and he wouldn't run away from a pretty woman—especially if he was wounded; he ain't no fool, Captain Tom, ain't!"

"No, sah! 'Deed he ain't!" laughed the darcy, as he turned on his heel and once more took up his path and his tune where he had left off.

Nat watched him, till he was lost to view, and then turned back to camp and ordered his men to fall in for company drill.

Only this much of a concession could he consent to make to the feeling that possessed him; and his pulse was full and regular and his glance calm and untroubled and his appetite as eager as if he had not a care on his mind; and yet, but for Susie and Dick and little Rosy he would willingly have exchanged places with Tom, wherever the boy might be or under whatever circumstances; so much did he love him and so heavily did the dread mystery of his disappearance weigh constantly upon his mind.

But if you had asked Nat whether he *loved* Tom, he

would have been furiously indignant at such an imputation; for in Clayton it was held to be unmanly in one man to love another; he might *like* him and *love* a woman; but he could never love one of his own sex and retain his manliness.

Now in choosing Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy for the dangerous and important errand upon which he had sent him, Nat showed good judgment. The black fellow came to the regiment bringing a large fund of shrewdness which had enabled him to learn from his new friends, and adapt himself to their ways with great quickness. The good treatment he received made this easier for him as well as the genuine affection he soon acquired for them.

So that, in his way, he soon offered them the sincerest flattery—he imitated them in manners and speech and even in modes of thought; and that explains why it was that Nat wasted no words in sending the darky forth to search for “the young cappen.” Accustomed to his ways, and having studied his methods, ‘Curg was only an instant in getting the bearings of Nat’s observations, and needed no detailed instructions or hints.

Even if the mission had not been to his liking he would have entered upon it without hesitation; but it was to his liking; he did not much believe that Tom was living, but he was willing to look for him, and if his search should be successful of all things nothing would make him prouder and happier. Then, besides, he would be foot-loose and fancy free; to roam about as he wished, keeping always in mind, of course, his errand. He was a thorough adept in the free-masonry that obtained among the colored people of the South, and had no care for what he should eat nor what he should drink, neither the place where he should repose himself; these things would come at the bidding of the man who understood how to command them, and he knew. The story of that free-masonry which carried on an important work among these people so long as they were slaves, and especially during the war, has never been written, and I fear never will be; those who know it best are unable to give it shape. But ‘Curg was in it and of it, and if they had priests in the order he must have worn the miter or the symbol which

corresponded thereto. In addition to this he could fiddle and dance and sing a song or tell a story with the best of them, and to crown all was an "exhorter" of no mean power and ability, having scriptural terms and religious tunes at his tongue's end and the faculty of warming himself up with the fervor of his own eloquence and the sound of his own voice in a way that awakened his susceptible hearers and carried them to the innermost vortex of shouting ecstasy.

All these he used with great skill in the attainment of his object; and yet he was a long time about it, as time goes, and more than four months elapsed before Nat saw him again—time enough to get very "hongry" in. For weeks he hovered about the place where poor Tom lay concealed and convalescing; for, whether it was luck or instinct or whatever it might have been that brought the suggestion to Nat, the direction he gave 'Curg, to bear to the southeast, toward McMinnville, was the proper one.

About five miles from that town, upon the side of a hill so high and so precipitous that it was fairly entitled to be called a mountain, stood a log cabin of two rooms, substantially built and covered with vines and shrouded with dwarf cedars and other scrubby trees—so that one might pass within a rod of it and, hearing no noise and seeing no smoke, have no idea of its presence.

On the southwesterly side of the house the hill fell off with such abruptness that its face could not be scaled; and here a shelf of rock jutted out as if contrived for a lookout. Beneath it stretched miles of wild, beautiful country which the eye might feast upon at time of leisure.

In that cabin, attended constantly by a big, broad, good-natured black woman, and visited occasionally by Ethel Lynde, Tom had lain for four months, struggling with death, and now, having conquered, convalescing as I have said.

By what means she had got him there need not be recounted, but there he was; saved by the woman he loved, the woman who loved him more sincerely and honestly beyond question than she had ever loved any other human being. Woman she was; and ten years at least, Tom's elder. It was only in the agony of her

self-reproach that she rashly admitted on the battlefield of Stone River that she was old enough to be his mother—and the devil himself would not have thought her to be more than seventeen, if he had no better means of telling her age than to merely judge by her appearance—but he had.

She had moved him when he was to all intents and purposes a dead man, to this eyrie of hers, refusing and disdaining all medical or surgical help; and had, with the assistance of the buxom colored woman, nursed him back to life. She knew little of the art of treating wounds, and the black woman knew less; but their fingers were light and soft, and they applied simple dressings to his wounds and gave him nourishing food.

Did she refuse the aid of the surgeons because she had a vague hope, which she would not, perhaps, acknowledge to herself, that he might die in her arms and thus cut off all the terrible possibilities that she saw looming in the future if he lived? Or did she have faith that she could restore him and was she jealously unwilling that he should owe life to any one else?

The wound at the base of the skull seemed only a bruise with a laceration of the scalp, and it healed first; but the bayonet-thrust through the lungs was obstinate, and kept the boy weak from its great drain upon his system for a long time. Still, after many days it, too, began to grow better, and at last he grew strong enough to sit up, and then to walk about the house and finally to go out to the shelf of rock where he would spend hours gazing upon the beautiful scene with eyes which seemed to note nothing. He talked but little, even to Ethel, and seemed to be struggling, at times, with an effort to recall something which constantly eluded him.

Ethel came to him at irregular intervals. Sometimes she would be absent two and even three weeks; on her return she would be with him a day, occasionally two or three days. While with him she, too, was silent and repressed. For hours, latterly, she would sit by his side, holding his hand, and alternately looking out over the hills, and then into his face, throwing into her eyes when he returned her gaze such strength of eager questioning

as one would think would have had power to make an image speak. And he would permit his hand to rest in hers as if he was quite as well satisfied with that as he could be with anything else that was a matter of indifference with him; and his eyes met hers with honest frankness but without a gleam to show that he read her question or had any answer of any sort to give her or understood that their relations were novel and had not always been so. In fact Tom behaved like a man who was bereft of all his wits save those which enabled him to eat when he was hungry, drink when he was thirsty, sleep when he was drowsy and come in when it rained.

Only in the one thing did he show that he had such a thing as a mind; and that was in his frequently recurring brown study, when, as I have said, he seemed to be trying to recall something.

The woman was puzzled. Not once had he spoken her name since that frightful moment on the battlefield, when he called upon her for water. And yet his powers of speech were not impaired. He was always prompt to reply to questions or remarks concerning ordinary things; but he never spoke her name, or indeed, gave her any appellation; and when she spoke to him of things that had occurred prior to the battle he smiled blandly upon her as if she were saying something which required no response.

She was greatly puzzled. He showed no affection for her nor interest in her any more than in the black woman whose kindness he appreciated just as much, apparently, as he did Ethel's devotion. Ethel blushed sometimes when she found herself striving by the arts she knew so well how to use and which she had so often used successfully, to make him give some sign that he still loved her. But, although she went beyond all precedent, she got no response.

"Can it be," she asked herself, "that this is contempt; that he suspects or knows the truth, and that this has killed his love?"

There was nothing to show that this was the case; nothing to show that the old love had ever existed or that a new love was possible; he might just as well have been without a heart, so far as this was concerned.

Away off there in that secluded spot he was tranquil and apparently safe from intrusion, although the country round about swarmed with the soldiers of the two armies.

A path not easy to find led to the house and no one but the two women appeared there for long weeks. He was always quiet and patient and gentle and pleasant; and tried, evidently, if he had any volition of mind at all, to give as little trouble as possible.

But the look that showed some sort of disturbance of his mental faculties, feeble though it might be, came with greater frequency as health and strength came back to him.

"Is he thinking whether he ought to kill me, as I deserve?" she asked herself; "or what does it mean?"

The answer came very unexpectedly one day, late in June. Ethel, coming back from an absence of three weeks, had seated herself by him on the shelf of rock, and sat looking abroad, with an anxious, troubled expression. Suddenly, right below them, rang out the sharp reports of a battery of artillery, one gun following the other so quickly that the fresh report leaped full upon the front of the echo of the first, crowding the hills with a crashing roar that went flying hither and thither for escape.

Tom rose quickly to his feet and bent over the edge of the rock looking down into the valley, where a cavalry skirmish, plainly visible and not a half a mile away, had just sprung into life. Ethel, with her hand upon his arm gazed at him with parted lips.

All at once he fell a-trembling and then turned to her with blazing eyes saying hoarsely: "He tried to choke me to death!"

CHAPTER XXI.

A RASH VOLUNTEER.

GENERAL ROSECRANS' record in the War of the Rebellion has amply demonstrated his right to be regarded as a great and brilliant strategist. His weak point was shown when the quick happenings of battle upset his preconceived plans with either unexpected success or an unlooked-for reverse. At such times he seemed wildly elated or utterly bewildered; his elation made him visionary; while under defeat he was at a loss what to do; and while he was building air-castles upon his unlooked-for victory, or was taking time (when he did take time) to adjust himself and his army to the changed condition of things occasioned by his reverse, and make new plans, the enemy, cooler and more vigilant, sometimes pushed on to success or dared a defeat which if it came was not owing to the Union general's readiness. It may be that in some cases of his disasters his subordinates were more to blame than he for the failure of his elaborately laid plans; sometimes subordinate commanders do more toward whipping their own army than the enemy; and wherever the opportunity occurs, as on Wednesday at Stone River, for instance, Rosecrans ought to have the benefit of this doubt; because, notwithstanding his one weak point, he was unquestionably a brave and patriotic and much more than ordinarily skillful soldier.

In June 1863, General Bragg lay at his ease, ruling throughout nearly all of Middle Tennessee, and having in his possession East Tennessee, with Chattanooga for his distributing base of supplies, Shelbyville, strongly entrenched, for his headquarters, with a *corps d'arme* in the town and another in its front holding advantageous

positions at Liberty Gap, Hoover's Gap, and Bellbuckle Gap, openings through which alone the range of mountainous hills between the two armies could be passed by wagons and artillery; Tullahoma, about fifteen miles to the southeast of Shelbyville, was the depot of supplies for the Confederate Army in Middle Tennessee. Shelbyville lies almost due south of Murfreesboro and perhaps twenty-five or twenty-eight miles distant. From Columbia, lying about thirty miles west of Shelbyville to McMinnville, perhaps thirty-five miles east of his headquarters, Bragg had a chain of troops, cavalry and infantry and guerrillas, amply sufficient, one would think, to guard against all danger of a surprise from an army moving from Murfreesboro to attack him, and not strong enough to scatter itself with any safety over the country.

Passing south, and especially southeast from Murfreesboro the country grows more and more rough and hilly till the Cumberland Mountains are encountered at the cornering of Georgia and Alabama near Bridgeport in the northeastern part of the latter State; and this was the route the Army of the Cumberland had to take.

An old soldier can readily see what all this involves; the dragging of supply and ammunition teams for an army of between sixty and seventy thousand men, to say nothing of artillery, over rough country roads scarcely more than blazed, through forests and rocky defiles, up and down hills so large that they scarcely escape proper classification as mountains. Add to these difficulties, great enough in themselves, the further embarrassment of a heavy and steadily downpouring rain, to soften fields and roads and to make the clay hills slippery as soap, and some idea may be gained by even those who are unaccustomed to war, of the magnitude of the undertaking that lay before General Rosecrans. For during the nine days consumed in the Tullahoma campaign proper, it rained constantly; till the soldiers of the Army of the Cumberland, remembering how it rained during the Stone River campaign began to complain that they were growing web-footed; which was something not required by the articles of war, and to which they had not pledged themselves when they enlisted.

With flanks so widely extended to deal with, it was of course out of the question to undertake to go around them, while the front was so well protected by earthworks that it would have been folly to have assaulted them and the two corps which held them, and be exposed at the same time to the operations of the outlying troops who could be easily concentrated from the two far stretching wings and hurled upon the rear of the assailants. General Rosecrans therefore decided to throw his army in a body as compact as might be possible upon a point to the right, or west of Shelbyville, with the purpose to break the line and if Bragg should wait for him, of attacking Shelbyville from the south. The three corps of the army, Thomas' (the Fourteenth), McCook's (the Twentieth), and Crittenden's (the Twenty-first) were put in motion toward Bragg's right, on the 23d of June, while Granger's reserve corps (the Fourth) made a feint on the left; and the cavalry under Stanley were set at it to amuse Bragg's troops all along the extent of his front, so as to keep them from conspiring together in numbers too formidable at any single point on the long line.

The weather was extremely warm, usually, during the daytime—with that peculiarly sticky, sultry quality to the atmosphere so exasperating when men are at hard work or in a great hurry—while at night it was too cool for comfort, especially when wet green wood refused to do much more than smoke the eyes till they grew both red and raw.

Perhaps not much of the details of the "Tullahoma campaign" need to be given, and it will be sufficient to say that in five days Bragg had been driven from Shelbyville and in four days more from Tullahoma as well, and that Rosecrans had conquered the country clear up to the gates of Chattanooga with a loss of only five hundred and eighty men; while Bragg lost nearly two thousand who were taken prisoners, eight field pieces, and three rifled siege guns, to say nothing of *material* left behind in his hasty and undignified and inglorious retreat. Of the numbers of his killed and wounded we have no account.

It was an encounter between some of Stanley's Union cavalry and Wheeler's Confederates, that awakened Tom's

sleeping senses and gave him the key to the riddle that had seemed to puzzle him so long. And a very pretty fight it was, too, especially when seen from a safe distance, for it was stubbornly and gallantly maintained on both sides.

Ethel was dismayed when Tom turned to her with his flashing eyes and shouted out so strangely the solution to his haunting enigma; but she mentally braced herself for what might follow. Never before had Tom given the slightest indication by word or gesture that he remembered anything of the occurrences of that awful night on the battlefield. Now that he had recalled this much, where would his remembrances stop? Would it all come back to him? Would he see her as she was and then despise and spurn her? Unquestionably he would drive her from him if he ever came to understand her properly.

She never before felt so keenly and bitterly the pitifulness of her position.

She was flattered and courted by men wherever she went, but loved purely and truly by none. She played her part with her victims and tools within the Union lines, but she knew that among them all she had inspired no noble passion; Miles Bancroft was mad with an unhalloved, feverish, devilish love for her; he would give his life as he had given his soul for her; but of all men on the face of the earth she loathed him the most; and never so much as when with wheedling caresses she stole from him the secrets of the camp she was set to watch.

Among the Confederates she met with flattery and praise and sometimes a forced attempt at gallant badinage; here she reigned in one sense a queen, because no one else could do the work with such marvellous speed and accuracy and safety as she could; but men looked upon her as being what she actually was—a spy—and their admiration never got beyond admiration; they assigned to the one who was willing to do such work such qualities as would forever forbid the thought of anything more; one may admire the colors and graceful coils and horrible, supple strength of a serpent, but without the slightest inclination to cultivate an intimacy with the monster.

The woman had a side the world never saw. She knew as no one else did why she, beautiful and accomplished and naturally amiable and affectionate and of noble impulses, had chosen to perform the work in which she was engaged. She knew that day by day the gnawing worm burrowed deeper and deeper into her heart and gave her no peace, although she smiled and was gay and debonair, or timid and helpless, or bold and splendid, daring or trustful, as her business required. She knew that though she was filled with a hungry longing for the best that the world and humanity could ever give to her starving soul, it would never come to her; that at the best it would never come to stay.

When Tom fell into her net, she knew that she was a fool to dream the happy dreams that his coming awakened; but for her life she could not help it. At first she was only amused; she encouraged him more by way of a relaxation and a recreation than anything else; she knew that, as a captain in an infantry regiment he would never be of any use to her in her business; captains having charge of companies, in a large army, are seldom burdened with weighty secrets of the commanding general's plans; but he was so brave, so bold, so straightforward and honest in his boyish enthusiasm, and so unconscious of the wonderful attractiveness of his fresh, simple manhood, that she could not but admire him; and when he poured out his passion headlong, crowning her, in his ignorance and trustfulness with all that charms in a pure and guileless maiden, she was touched and grieved; and her grief led her to wish that she was what he thought she was, and the willful love for the boy that soon came to her made her play the part—made her try to deceive even herself—till her own passion got beyond her control.

She had meant to break with him, quietly but decisively some day—after she had indulged herself for a little, brief moment in the clear, bracing atmosphere of a pure love, as she never could hope to do again—but the selfishness of her passion strengthened as she dallied with her contemplated duty, and she soon found herself bound in chains.

Why should she not have at least one blessing in her

life of acrid bitterness? Why should there not be at least one human being upon whom her caresses should not fall like an accursed, burning, withering blight?

She asked herself these questions when, after his recovery seemed to be assured, she found that he was changed and had lost his former life. She cultivated a hope that he would remain so, unjust and hard as such a hope might appear; and that when quiet came again she might go with him away from all danger of detection, and live an honest life with him, such as would be possible only so long as he remained so nearly a fool.

It was hard that he should not love her—and it was clear that his power to do that had gone with his other missing faculties; but he would continue to respect her—he was always too kind and thoughtful to ask her any questions—and he might remain thus.

Tom had told her in Nashville so much of his life as satisfied her that she would be wronging no one but him if she thus carried him off; there was no mother nor sister nor sweetheart to grieve over his absence and die from the mystery of his disappearance.

And now, was all this castle she had so carefully and fearfully reared to fall and crumble to nothing at the sound of the guns bellowing so viciously below there? She suffered from the agony of her apprehensions for only a moment however.

The boy showed no surprise at the scene below. It was as if he was used to look on something of the sort every day; but he was interested; he watched eagerly and with the eye of an expert; "No, no!" he would say. "You're wrong—don't you see? Push for the right flank—he can't get away then! Take your guns around there to the left—why, confound the fellow, he doesn't know any more about war than a last year's bird's nest!"

His elevated position gave him the advantage of a full view of the whole field; and strangely enough all his sympathies were in favor of the Confederates! Was this explained by the fact that he still wore the gray uniform in which Ethel had caused him to be clothed when she took him off the field?

"What is it?" she asked.

"Why, the fellow will let them all get away! He doesn't know how to fight! I must go and show him!"

"No, no!" she cried.

But it was too late; leaping lightly to a swinging grape-vine which trailed over a corner of the rock, he let himself down rapidly, hand over hand, while she, above, watched him, giddily. He was as quick as a monkey and she marvelled and rejoiced at his skill; till suddenly he missed his hold, grasped at the empty air and then whirling, fell heavily on the rocks below.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SUPERIORITY OF HINDSIGHT OVER FORESIGHT.

HINDSIGHT wins a thousand victories where foresight barely manages, by hook or by crook, to achieve one. This is a hard but a true saying.

So that it is perfectly easy, my friend, for you and me, sitting here with our pipes and at our ease, shouldering our crutches and showing how fields were lost and won, to go further and show how fields that were lost, might have been won if the foresight of the unfortunate commander had been equal to our hindsight; if he had only known then as much about the condition of things as we do now, conning over reports and growing wise over maps; if he had weighed as accurately then as we do now the effect of feinting and charging and shifting of troops, as well as the purposes and intuitions of the enemy. Volumes might be written and doubtless have been written showing the value of *ex post facto* wisdom.

Still, it is probably true that it can be shown that battles have been lost through the fault of commanders; and that the weakness of generals, of one sort or another, has contributed to bring disaster upon nations and peoples; and it is the misfortune of the weakling that when he has made his mistake he must take his punishment for it as if it had been a crime. This law is unquestionably a cruel one, but it may not be evaded. It is in human nature and is modeled upon a higher one, as we are taught.

The Great Maker sends a human being into the world so illy prepared to meet its trials and temptations that it is inevitable that he shall err; and for every error there is provided an inexorable punishment. This goes to the

utmost extreme; for the human being may be sent into the world with such faults and tendencies that it is beyond peradventure that he shall commit the unpardonable sin; whereupon it is provided by divine command that he shall be forever damned and tormented throughout all eternity.

But this puzzling thing has nothing to do with this story.

There is this difference between the two; that whereas the Great Maker has it in His power to create His human being with such strength, so perfectly, that he will not and cannot err, just as easily as to make him so weak that it is foreordained that he must err, on the other hand we mortals have no power in constructing men's souls and minds and hearts, and therefore have no responsibility for them; while at the same time we have ample verge and scope, in our knowledge of these inevitable imperfections in each other, to be charitable, one toward the other. And if we are taught the divine law aright, and understand it properly, it does seem that the human law is the kindlier, and that in administering it, we are more charitable—since for offenses of this sort our punishment is not extreme though it may be hard and unjust. The divine law adjures us to be charitable; and I am free to confess that I think we are entitled to more credit than we give ourselves—for obeying that injunction, in some measure at least.

But there can be no doubt but that General Rosecrans must accept the responsibility of having fought a battle at Chickamauga which was one of the bloodiest in the history of wars, and seemed productive of no good results, when he might have avoided it, perhaps altogether, or at all events might have managed it to fight his battle, if a battle was inevitable after having flanked Bragg out of Chattanooga, on better terms and under circumstances which would have made it less bloody and more decisive of good results.

There are two theories as to why he fought this battle, which will be considered further on.

At the close of the Tullahoma campaign, Rosecrans established his army in the country between McMinnville

on the north, Winchester on the west, and Stevenson and Bridgeport in the south, a line about sixty miles long from north to south, deflected a few miles to the west to touch Winchester. Bragg, having been flanked out of Shelbyville and Tullahoma with such neatness and dispatch as was fairly laughable, brought up at Chattanooga with his army intact, and set himself down in that stronghold made more secure by earthworks and intrenchments, and like a boy with a chip on his shoulder, "dared" his enemy "to do it again." And, as it frequently occurs to boys or men who become thus foolishly insincere (for he didn't want him to do it again, any more than the boy wants the chip knocked off again), Rosecrans went incontinently to work and did do it again.

The misfortune was that having done it again, the Union commander was not content to let well enough alone. It sometimes happens that, the fellow having knocked the chip off of the other fellow's shoulder upon repeated and clearly insincere invitations thereto, grows more obtrusive than has been demanded or requested of him, and, proceeding to take further liberties, gets walloped, and has nobody to thank for his pains but himself. He is fortunate, or the community is, if he takes all the punishment in his own person. The general who gets into this sort of a fix, however, seldom suffers as much as the country does.

Of course it was not only because Bragg tauntingly "dared" him that Rosecrans drove him out of Chattanooga; there were the most imperative reasons why that city should be in the possession of the Union forces.

To secure it would be to gain a great advantage and to hasten the work of putting down the rebellion. It was in the fulfillment of a high and patriotic duty that Rosecrans sounded the onset.

Chattanooga lies at the foot of a valley flanked on the east by a chain of bold hills known as Missionary Ridge, and on the west by a monarch among hills, known as Lookout Mountain. Owing to the course of the river (the Tennessee) at this point, however, the valley makes up from Lookout, leaving the northern extremity of that mountain some three miles to the south of the city, the

river forming the western boundary as it does the northern and a small part of the southern. From the northeast and northwest, Chattanooga is the natural gateway, set among towering mountains, to the great cotton belt of the South—the richest portion of that country. At the time of which I write, railroads centered there which, with their connecting lines, formed communication with the north, east, west, south, southeast, northeast, southwest and northwest. From a military point of view it was of more importance than any other city still in the hands of the Confederates, save Richmond alone.

Rosecrans had a choice as to how he should approach Chattanooga. Going east and north he might cross the river above the city and thus get into the valley; or he might go south, crossing the stream forty miles below the place, and approach it from the south after having made a very long and circuitous march. Adopting the first plan, he would have to march over the Cumberland Mountains, and then cross Walden's Ridge, a formidable range running along the west bank of the river. Reaching the point at which he desired to cross the stream his passage would doubtless be hotly contested; having succeeded, however, in getting across (which he might or might not be able to do, after all), he would find himself confronted by an army nearly as large as his own in an intrenched camp with its lines of communication in good shape, while he would have to rely upon wagon transportation over two mountain ranges for his supplies; and then he would have reasonable assurance that by the time he had got fairly to work making fruitless and costly assaults upon the enemy's strong works, Buckner's Corps would come down from East Tennessee and jump on his back.

A troublesome thing about war is that you can't always make your enemy conform his actions to your plan of operations so as to insure your own success; and you are compelled to act upon the supposition that instead of assisting to further your wishes he will be apt to do precisely what you don't want him to do, and to leave undone those things which you would like to have him to

do, because there is no health in him so far as you are concerned. The man who goes to war with an impression the reverse of this will get left; if it is proper to drop into the vernacular just here.

Adopting the second plan, Rosecrans would have to push his army over the Cumberland Mountains, cross the river near Stevenson, and then push again over Sand (or Raccoon) and Lookout Mountains. These twins stretch their huge proportions (each twenty-two hundred feet above tidewater and from thirty to fifty miles long) in a southwesterly direction from Chattanooga, the former being, as I have said, about three miles from that city, and the latter perhaps five miles farther to the west, but both, on the north, pushing their noses so near to the river as to leave barely room for the railroad from the west to creep around on the banks. Once over these obstructions, however, Rosecrans could strike Bragg's communications with the south and effectually cut off his supplies, leaving him no resource, as he could not go into East Tennessee because Burnside there commanded a Union army of no mean size.

At best it was a choice of difficulties, involving, whichever way he might go, hazards and obstacles not to be lightly thought of. This was made doubly impressive by the fact that he was advancing unsupported, or practically without support, into a part of the enemy's country where it would be easy to concentrate a great army against him. Speaking generally, his line would face the east. On the south not a bluecoat could be found short of the coast, hundreds of miles distant; on the north was Burnside, but with Buckner in his front and giving him all the work he could do with the force at his command. At best he would have to plunge boldly into the enemy's country, cutting loose from his base and putting it away from him behind almost impassable mountains and a broad, deep, swift stream.

All these things Rosecrans saw, and laying them before the authorities at Washington, begged for them to order some diversion somewhere to at least keep the whole Confederate Army from pouring in upon him, if they would not give him support on his flanks. But the authorities

at Washington, sitting in a high conclave of bureau generals—fellows who write books to tell you how to build forts but don't know how to take them, and other wise men who reduce the whole art and science of war to three volumes, but never to practice—these ardent patriots in utter and inexcusable and willful ignorance of perils and hazards involved while they refused the assistance so urgently implored, spent thousands of dollars of government money in exhorting an already willing soldier to go forth to more than doubtful battle. If there had been fighting anywhere east or west it would have been some relief; but the wiseacres would fire no shot, nor even blow a horn, except to urge Rosecrans on.

At last, after six or eight weeks of stupendous exertions, Rosecrans got ready to move; and as history shows, he took the southern route, which, if it seemed the more laborious, was by far the wiser choice.

A stratagem is an artifice and an artifice is a deceitful thing. Artifices are used in maneuvering an army in the face of the enemy, in trading horses, and in carrying on commercial enterprises. The soldier who excels in strategy is a great general; and the man who thus excels in civil life makes the most money. From which it does not by any means follow that the successful horse trader would make a great soldier. There is in this an argument going to show that we may do evil that good may come of it; but it has nothing to do with the story; being merely a remark *en passant* for the benefit of whom it may concern.

Of course, if Bragg had known that Rosecrans intended to scatter his army for fifteen or twenty miles up and down Sand and Lookout Mountains he would have gathered his warriors together and, posting them advantageously, would have fallen upon the Union forces with the view to annihilate them in detail; which benevolent intention would have been rather easy of execution under the circumstances. In order to deceive Bragg, therefore, Rosecrans sent a large part of Crittenden's Corps with ample cavalry, to prance up and down on the west side of the Tennessee River, above and below Chattanooga, and opposite that city, with much shouting of captains

and neighing of horses and the occasional firing of great guns, as if the very devil were to pay, without defalcation and notice waived. And General Bragg was deceived thereby, as he ought not to have been; and, with his men in gray, he braced himself and held his breath to resist an attack from the thin line of uproarious fellows just across the river.

For, while it is tolerably safe, in war, to assume that your enemy is not about to do that which he seems to be about to do, but on the contrary is proceeding at the very moment to do something else and quite different, yet it is perplexing at times to be sure as to the thing; and the wear and tear on a man's mind under such circumstances is something prodigious. This makes it clear why it is that the man who loves his ease and safety and the solid and liquid comforts of life, and to sleep well in his bed o' nights, is not ambitious for a warrior's life, and when got into it does not make the best soldier.

So that, to make a long story short, while Bragg's eyes were bulging out at the fellows across the river, and he was spitting on his hands in order that he might fight the better when the time should come, Rosecrans had put the bulk of his army across the river and the mountains and was dashing eastward for Dalton and Lafayette, and even south toward Rome, to cut off Bragg's communications.

A few of the Union troops crossed on the partially burned railroad bridge at Bridgeport, so soon as it could be put in tolerable repair; others crossed at Shellmound in boats which they gathered up here and there along the river; at the mouth of Battle Creek, the resolute fellows constructed rafts and piled guns and ammunition thereon, which, swimming, they pushed across; but the pontoon bridge south of Stevenson, at Caperton's Ferry gave passage to the bulk of the army.

On crossing, McCook was sent with his corps twenty-five miles south, through Will's Valley, between Sand (or Raccoon) and Lookout Mountains, traversing the entire length of the latter; Thomas was pushed with his corps across the mountains to a point in McLemore's Cove, six miles west of Lafayette, and confronting Dug Gap, in

the Pigeon Mountains; while that part of Crittenden's Corps which was not devoting itself to the entertainment of Bragg in the neighborhood of Chattanooga, followed the line of the railroad up to the base of Lookout overlooking the city.

The movement of the Army of the Cumberland was begun properly on the 1st of September; on the 8th the troops had been disposed as I have described, and on the 7th Bragg realized that he had been outwitted and that his real danger lay behind him; for on the night of the 8th it was discovered that he had evacuated Chattanooga, and the next morning Crittenden marched in and took possession.

This is, perhaps, not the only instance in which one man has gotten ahead of another by simply getting behind him. It is questionable whether, in human experience, this has ever at any time been a paradox, although it sounds like one.

But here it was that Rosecrans lost his head, as completely through this easy success by which Chattanooga fell into his hands as he did eleven days later when disaster to his right wing sent him, demoralized, back to Chattanooga from the field of Chickamauga, to prepare to retreat across the Tennessee River without waiting to properly inform himself as to the true condition of affairs or to make a proper effort to rally his troops.

He started out from Stevenson to take Chattanooga, and by a most brilliant strategy had taken the place with scarcely the loss of a man or the burning of a cartridge.

Bragg had whipped out of Chattanooga as expeditiously as he had vacated Shelbyville and Tullahoma, or Murfreesboro after Miller's charge across Stone River, on the 2d of January. The town fell into Crittenden's hands without the firing of a gun.

McCook's corps was a good two or an easy three days' march from Chattanooga; Thomas' could have reached the town in twenty hours; Crittenden's and Gordon Granger's (the reserve corps) were in and around the town, and Bragg was at Lafayette, thirty miles away from it, confronted by Thomas. A day and a night—even less time—would have brought McCook up to Thomas, and

another day and night would have massed the whole army in the fortifications around the town, which Bragg had been at such pains to construct.

Why, then, did not Rosecrans at once enter the town, make himself secure and set about perfecting his line of communication (the railroad) to Bridgeport and Stevenson, his base of supplies?—the two towns are so near together that they may be lumped as one so far as this purpose is concerned. General Thomas urged Rosecrans to do this. The objective was gained, and it certainly seemed madness itself to think of going still further south, stretching the long line of communication to still greater attenuation, through a country so rough and mountainous that it might properly be called impassable and so poor that it would not afford subsistence and forage for his army for a day, even if it had not been swept over and drained of its supplies by Bragg.

There was another thing that ought to have struck Rosecrans with great force; and that was that while his three great corps were separated widely, his enemy had adroitly slipped down to a point opposite the center of the line of the Army of the Cumberland, where he lay with his whole army in hand, six miles from Thomas and fifteen from McCook, in shape to strike the former and crush him before McCook could come up to his assistance and in ample time to turn and rend the latter also. But so far was Rosecrans from seeing this, if he has not been wrongly judged, that instead of uniting his great divisions he kept McCook in his dangerous isolation while he was urging Thomas to rush into the swarming hosts of the enemy at Lafayette, and crowned all by bringing Crittenden down from Chattanooga to a point within ten miles of Bragg, but at least fifteen from Thomas and thirty from McCook, as if to multiply the chances in favor of his enemy.

Meantime Bragg had been reinforced by fifteen thousand troops from Mississippi under Johnston, and by Buckner from East Tennessee with at least ten thousand more.

The fact is that Rosecrans had jumped to the conclusion that Bragg had become panic-stricken and was running

away from him, pellmell. He therefore gave instant orders for pursuit, and in this view, it is fair to say, he was sustained by the wiseacres at Washington, who not only telegraphed him frequently to proceed with his campaign, as if he had nothing to do but to pursue Bragg, and need not concern himself at all about Chattanooga or the line over which his supplies must come, but pooh-poohed his apprehensions that troops would be sent from Virginia to reinforce his enemy; even going to the length of dispatching him an idle rumor that, on the contrary, Bragg was reinforcing Lee! Were they satirical, or simply idiotic?

There is much, however, to be said in extenuation of the mistake made by Rosecrans at Chickamauga. He ought not to be blamed too severely because his remarkable success at Shelbyville and Tullahoma, crowned by the new triumph by which Chattanooga fell into his hands, had elated him so much that he became oversanguine. It takes a stronger head to withstand a tremendous run of prosperity, than it does to keep steady before adversity. Especially is this so if the lucky man thinks and has reason to think that his prosperity is in large measure due to the exercise of his own sagacity. If Rosecrans got the notion into his head that Bragg had grown to be afraid of him and would never attempt to stand up against him, we can look upon the fact with some charity, however much we may blame him.

But there is another reason why Rosecrans is entitled to liberal allowance in this matter; and that lies in the fact that he was bothered and worried and annoyed, as was nearly every general who ever had a so-called independent command in the field, by the intermeddling of the old grannies at Washington who assumed, with the impudence of charlatanism, that they, at the capital city many hundreds of miles away and with no information save that which they got from the commanders themselves and from the wonderfully imperfect maps of the day (only equalled for bewildering and misleading qualities by the war-maps that have since been published in war histories), could judge better than the man in the field and dealing with the facts, when and how he ought

to move his troops and where he ought to force his enemy to join issue of battle. It is perfectly easy with a map before us to cross a mountain range in the mere lifting of an eyelash, and to traverse a hundred miles of plain with a twirl of the thumb-nail; but to the general in the field at the head of a large army and confronted by a wily opponent also equipped with a large and well-armed force, the crossing of a mountain range with horse, foot, and artillery, trains filled with supplies and equipage, ammunition wagons, ambulances, and hospital stores is not done with a "hey presto!" nor do you force your way through the hostile plain with the speed of thought by any sort of prestidigitatorial jugglery.

Which suggests, that while we are measuring up the generals of the late war, we should not forget this truth; and that we should go deliberately enough about it to recall the real obstacles that they had to contend with.

So, these Washington people, all save the president himself, who was great enough to know that he did not know everything, in the intervals of airing their grandeur on foaming steeds and roaring at headquarters' orderlies and attending receptions and bluffing newspaper reporters, and sacrificing themselves at champagne suppers and foreign legation balls, had found time to telegraph all manner of orders to Rosecrans about what he ought to do, till unquestionably the matter of dealing with them was a great deal more vexatious to him than was the question presented by the hostile force in his front.

During the time that the Army of the Cumberland lay at Murfreesboro, before it moved on to Shelbyville, the distinguished person who was then general-in-chief, having been taken to Washington and elevated to that high place, because it is fair to presume he had clearly demonstrated that he was good-for-nothing in the field, sent his telegrams urging and commanding the forward movement of the army so frequently, and at last in terms so insulting, that Rosecrans, brave and patriotic as he was, and willing to bear almost everything for the sake of his country, very properly lost all patience and curtly replied, having exhausted all polite and courteous forms of expostulation that "if the general-in-chief thought the Army

of the Cumberland ought to move at once he had better come out to Murfreesboro and move it himself!"

This experience was repeated at Stevenson; from the moment that Tullahoma fell and before the long line of railroad could be patched up so as to get supplies down to the new base, Washington began a running fire of telegrams demanding an immediate advance, and culminating early in August in the following:

"WASHINGTON, August 5, 1863.

"The orders for the advance of your army, and that its progress be reported daily, are peremptory."

This was signed by the then general-in-chief who unfortunately is now dead and escaped from the punishment he deserved for his extra-officious zeal to do something for the salary he was getting; which amounted to nothing more useful than the embarrassment of the generals in the field who were doing their best.

Under the sting of this sort of a lash is it any wonder when Rosecrans got started, even imperfectly prepared as he was, that he should jump clear through his collar?

We have seen that his movement was fairly begun on the 1st of September; and yet, with that delay, he had only been able to collect supplies enough to last his army for twenty-five days.

On the 11th of September, at the moment that Bragg, reinforced by Buckner and Johnston, had with his entire army surrounded Thomas in McLemore's Cove, the Washington authorities telegraphed Rosecrans:

"After holding the mountain passes on the west, and Dalton or some other point on the railroad, to prevent the return of Bragg's army, it will be decided whether your army shall move further into Georgia and Alabama. It is reported by deserters that a portion of Bragg's army is reinforcing Lee. It is important that the truth of this should be ascertained as early as possible."

Certainly!

And having finished this dispatch it is fair to presume

that this long-range warrior joined his brave civilian *confrère* in the next room; and that the two together then refreshed their noble souls by brow-beating and bullying a wounded soldier who wanted an extension of his leave of absence, or a weeping woman who wanted permission to visit a hospital to nurse her dying husband.

Thank Heaven, there were no such fellows among the fighting men at the front!

Between the lines the dispatch said: "You see; it is as we told you it would be! There are so few Confederates before you and they are so cowardly, that all you have to do is to beat your drums and they will run like sheep! What few there are, are coming East. Never mind about the future! After you have carried out present instructions we will find a new parade ground for you to play at war in!"

When Buckner and Johnston joined Bragg the Confederate Army in Northern Georgia was as large as the Union Army under Rosecrans. The latter was scattered over a line forty miles long, each corps isolated; while the former was united and compact opposite the center of the Union line. It seems impossible that Rosecrans should have been blind to the terrible significance of the situation. He knew what that situation was on the night of the 9th or the morning of the 10th, and yet we find him taking no positive steps to concentrate his army till the 12th. Was he really blind to that significance, or insanely determined not to acknowledge his mistake, but to risk all that threatened him?

All that Bragg had to do was to remember how Napoleon had taught the world to fight, and to throw his whole army first upon Thomas till he had crushed him, and then turn at his leisure upon McCook fifteen miles away or Crittenden, who would be then at about the same distance. He could upon this plan have wiped the Army of the Cumberland out of existence with but little effort and without the slightest danger of failure, and have put such an aspect upon the politics of North America as would have filled the heart of the hater of free institutions with joy.

And when, on the 9th of September, Thomas' Corps,

led by Negley's division, debouched into McLemore's Cove, he showed that he was not blind to his great opportunity. He tried to crush Thomas, but the skill of that commander, and the inexplicable dilatoriness of some of the rebel generals, alone averted that disaster.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CAUTIOUS BLUNDERING.

NEGLEY'S division crossed Lookout Mountain at Stevens' Gap, about fifteen or twenty miles south of Chattanooga, on the 9th, the day that Crittenden entered the city. Baird's division a day later followed Negley's. Under previous orders these divisions pushed due east with Lafayette, perhaps ten miles distant, as their objective, where they were to take Bragg in the flank and with Crittenden to fall upon his rear, and destroy him. McCook, twenty miles further south, at or near Alpine, was to hold himself in readiness to meet the enemy should he escape Crittenden and Thomas.

After advancing about four miles against sharp but not formidable opposition, Negley found his further progress barred by impediments in Dug Gap, through which he must pass to get to Lafayette. Trees had been felled so as to make the Gap impassable; and a light force of Confederates was sufficient to hold him at bay. During the night Bragg gave orders to send a large force out to capture or annihilate Negley; the obstructions in Dug Gap and Catlett's Gap, a little further to the north, were removed, and on the morning of the 10th the rebel troops poured through these passes, covering Negley's front and swinging around on his flanks. At 8 o'clock on the 10th Baird joined Negley, forming on the left of the latter. A misunderstanding among Bragg's generals occasioned a delay by which the day was spent without important results, although the Confederate commander had ordered an immediate attack. Postponing, therefore, his movement till the next day, he ordered up fresh troops to insure success, and when day broke on the 11th Neg-

ley and Baird were surrounded front, right, and left by thirty thousand Confederate troops eager for the fray and under orders to begin it at once. Fortunately these two commanders realized their danger before the enemy gained their rear, and a retreat, masterly and in every way admirable, brought them with their trains and supplies back to the mountain by dark. Here during the night they were joined by Thomas himself with his two remaining divisions, and the corps was put into such strong defensive position that the enemy gave up the enterprise and turned to seek an easier conquest.

On the morning of the 10th General Negley caused information to be sent to General Rosecrans showing that he had met the enemy in force; the same day Crittenden's advance moving south from Chattanooga was met and successfully resisted by Bragg's troops near Lee and Gordon's mills, twelve miles from the point in the cove where Thomas' advance lay. In every direction from which Lafayette was approached Bragg showed his teeth and held his pursuers at bay. Notwithstanding this, Rosecrans issued orders during the night of the 10th to Crittenden, directing him to leave a brigade to reconnoiter toward Lee and Gordon's mills, while with the rest of his corps he should march on to Ringgold, a point at least twenty miles east of north of Lafayette and about the same distance from Thomas and fully fifty miles from McCook!

He still believed that Bragg was in full retreat, and at 10 o'clock of the night of the 10th he ordered Thomas to "open direct communication with McCook at once," and added: "It is important to know whether he (the enemy) retreats on Rome or Cedar Bluff." Twice during that night he urged upon Thomas the importance of his pushing on to attack the enemy at Lafayette; that is, to move with his one corps unsupported and in air, straight into the heart of Bragg's great army, outnumbering him three to one! At 9:45 p.m. he says: "He (the general commanding) is disappointed to learn that his (Negley's) forces move to-morrow morning instead of having moved this morning as they should have done, this delay imperilling both extremes of the army.

"Your movement on Lafayette should be made with the utmost promptness.

"Your advance ought to have threatened Lafayette yesterday evening."

At 10 p.m. he says: "Much depends upon the promptitude of your movements."

But Thomas was not to be pushed into the rash adventure, for he knew the perils before him and could not imagine Bragg such a fool as not to try to take advantage of the fatuity which kept the Union forces so widely separated. It was another case where Thomas was chided for "delay" when he was simply saving the whole army by his wise deliberation.

On the 11th Rosecrans either gets some glimmering of the true state of affairs or else at last wins his own consent to the admission that Bragg is, after all, not such a poltroon as to run away with an army of between fifty and sixty thousand men, well in hand, from an equal number of men widely scattered from Chattanooga and Ringgold to Alpine. He orders Crittenden to come in toward Gordon's mills that night; but even so late as 11:15 a.m. the next day (the 12th), he writes to Thomas that "Crittenden was probably at Gordon's mills by 10 o'clock to-day;" then he adds that he "is induced to think that General Negley withdrew more through prudence than compulsion" the night before, from a force of thirty thousand who had surrounded him and Baird in front of Dug Gap! He concludes his dispatch by saying that Crittenden's Corps "will attack the enemy as soon as it can be gotten in position. When a battle does begin, it is desirable that every command should do its best, and push hard, using the bayonet wherever possible."

And the order which is to bring up McCook, who is lying forty-two miles from Chattanooga (where the above dispatch is dated), sending out reconnoitering parties toward Rome, is not to go for some hours yet!

The blundering of Bragg and his generals had so far operated in favor of Rosecrans, and backed by Thomas' resolute refusal to enter the trap at Dug Gap, indisputably was the salvation of the Army of the Cumberland up to that time.

And still there was time to save it, and avert a battle on ground of the enemy's choice under most disadvantageous circumstances, with a broken-up railroad and forty miles of mountains between the army and its base of supplies, and with only six or eight days' rations in the wagons and the men's haversacks. As General Thomas pointed out, there was still time to reach the intrenchments at Chattanooga. But while Rosecrans refused to think of such a thing, he did begin to realize his danger; for, as he states in his official report, it then became apparent to him that it was "a matter of life and death to effect the concentration of the army."

The night of the 11th found McCook still at Alpine, his orders not permitting him to move till Bragg's routed army should come within his reach; Thomas twenty miles north of McCook still formed, with Lookout Mountain to protect his rear, facing Bragg's whole army, while Crittenden with the bulk of his corps was at Ringgold, twenty miles northeast of the Fourteenth Corps (Thomas' command), pushing for Dalton, some of his troops having already advanced fifteen miles at least in a southeasterly direction from Ringgold, every step carrying them just that much further away from their comrades on the west. If Crittenden had been permitted to proceed, and there was nothing so far in his orders to prevent, he would in eight hours' time have left the rest of the Union Army fully three days' march to the westward, with Bragg's army between him and them. He had passed Bragg's right flank and was actually marching away from both armies.

But Crittenden's order to return reached him during the night of the 11th; by which time Bragg had concluded that to attack Thomas in his strong position would have involved only a useless loss of life and ammunition, so well had Thomas chosen his ground and posted his troops for defense.

Foiled here, the rebel general turned to assail Crittenden, as next to whipping Thomas, being the best thing to do; and, simultaneously, in obedience to the orders he had received, Crittenden started down from Ringgold on the 12th to meet him. For while Crit-

tenden was withdrawing from Ringgold, Bragg was putting his army in motion to wipe him off the earth. He ordered Polk with his corps, supported by Buckner's Corps, to this duty; but for some unexplained reason the orders failed of execution and by the 13th Crittenden had returned to his place near Lee and Gordon's mills and within supporting distance of Thomas.

Even then Bragg might have whipped Crittenden; but he made no move; he sat him down along the Chickamauga, having concentrated his forces, and went into the business of "threatening the enemy in front," as he states in his official report. And he pursued this industry with such remarkable assiduity for the next five or six days that Rosecrans was enabled to reunite the Army of the Cumberland; and it was only after Rosecrans had succeeded in doing this that it seemed to occur to Bragg all at once that he might profitably go out of the "threatening" line and try something else for a change. Whether the knowledge that Longstreet was coming with a corps to reinforce him had anything to do with this swift resolution is not clear; but it probably had.

By the morning of the 14th, McCook had gotten two of his divisions *en route* to support Thomas, his order to do so having been received the night before. Thomas remained in McLemore's Cove till the 17th, moving up each day slowly and cautiously nearer and nearer to Crittenden, till on the evening of the 18th his head of column reached Crawfish Springs, a mile or two from Lee and Gordon's mills. McCook by this time had reached McLemore's Cove, and was following Thomas up, within close supporting distance.

During the 18th it was discovered that Bragg had begun to move his army along the east bank of the Chickamauga (the Union army being on the west bank) northward, and that unless something was done he would speedily be on Crittenden's flank and get possession of the roads communicating with Chattanooga. To meet this, Thomas, on reaching Crawfish Springs, was sent on; and making a night march he reached Kelley's farm, the scene of the first day's battle, by daylight of the 19th. His corps thus became the left wing of Rosecrans' army.

Of all the unlucky generals that ever were heard of in history Bragg seems to have been the most unfortunate in the matter of not having his orders carried out, or indeed executed at all. The rule seemed to be reversed with his subordinates, and they evidently looked upon an order from him as chiefly of value because the thing which it indicated was the thing which they were not to do. Whatever they might do, they were clearly not to do what he ordered. The cheerful alacrity with which they flew to disregard his orders, repeated for two days, to attack Thomas in McLemore's Cove, was admirable. And in failing to obey him they gave Thomas time to take a position where he could have whipped them during a week's fighting. So at Chickamauga; Bragg first ordered Polk and Buckner (on the 12th) to crush Crittenden, which they might have easily done, but which they calmly proceeded *not* to do. If he had not ordered it, or had told them not to attack Crittenden, the chances are that they would have wiped the Twenty-first Corps from off the face of the earth. Then again on the 17th he ordered an attack on Crittenden to be made on the following day. In accordance with precedents the order was not obeyed, and Thomas and McCook were given time, and just enough time, to close up; and then Bragg was confronted by a very weary army; but as savage and ugly as only a tired army can be, and consequently not the best army in the world to engage, as he found, on the 19th. If Bragg's orders—any one of them above referred to—had been executed, the Army of the Cumberland would have been annihilated, or brought so near to complete destruction that it could never have survived. The same result would have been attained if, instead of "threatening," Bragg had proceeded to engage Crittenden any time between the 13th and the 18th; although Thomas' careful and skillful advances day by day, lessened his chances of success, while they were not completely destroyed till McCook came up.

If Rosecrans had chosen, he could have moved on into Chattanooga with his whole force on the night of the 18th, with a very slight loss. The roads were open to him and the enemy was handling him as gingerly as a

woman does a horse. But for the third time he refused to evade the conflict. Whatever may have been his mistakes and his weaknesses, it can never be said of him that he was unwilling to fight, under any circumstances; nor can it be alleged of him that he ever failed in patriotic ardor.

During the 17th, Hood, leading the advance of Longstreet's Corps with three brigades, reported for duty to Bragg, and was sent the following day to join Buckner's Corps, Cheatham's division and Walker's Corps on the west bank of the stream, where daylight on the 19th found them fronting Thomas and Crittenden, with strongly posted lines.

PART IV.

HIS INSTRUMENTS.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NINETEENTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1863.

BUT if Bragg's subordinates had been slow up to the morning of the 19th, that eventful Saturday found them quick and alert to obey orders, with perhaps the solitary exception of General Polk, who could not have moved more ponderously or with more sedate deliberation if he had been proceeding against a free-thinking and recalcitrant priest in his diocese in the important matter of a violation of ecclesiastical law, regulating the color of his stole or the length or shape of his surplice.

But the Army of the Cumberland had benefited by the last but one of Bragg's misfortunes and blunders.

Thomas had but fairly placed his troops in position at daylight on Saturday, when, ignorant of the force in front of him on the west bank of the stream and having reason to believe that an isolated brigade on the east side of the stream and cut off from retreat by the burning of Reed's bridge the evening before by Colonel McCook, comprised all of the enemy's force in that immediate vicinity, he sent Brannan with two brigades to capture the intruders, and—that settled it.

It was like poking a stick into a hornet's nest, only a great deal more so.

The two brigades went boldly forward, and in the

striking of a match were furiously engaged; others were sent to their support and found their hands full of hot work without delay; and then, like a flash of lightning falling upon a towering tree, came a swift and heavy mass of men square upon our left flank, breaking and crumbling it to pieces, and pushing on ferociously and triumphantly southward till, by dint of throwing divisions after brigades into the breach the onset was first stayed, and then beaten back. Guenther's (Union) battery was lost and recaptured in a few minutes' of time.

The truth is that Bragg was as much surprised as Thomas. He had expected to find the Union left somewhere in the vicinity of Lee and Gordon's mills, but he struck it at least three miles north of that point. He essayed the same tactics he had used so successfully at Stone River on Wednesday, but he found the army at Chickamauga much better prepared for him; and right there score one for Rosecrans. There was good generalship in his disposition of his army on Saturday morning.

The ground on which this encounter took place was densely wooded, with but few cleared fields interspersed here and there, and they were small—mere patches. Divisions aligned upon each other fought for hours without being able to see each other or to judge, save by sound, what was going on to the right or left. Nobody knew intelligently what was happening, except Thomas, sitting there on his horse, quietly stroking his closely clipped beard and occasionally biting his nails.

But it was enough that he saw, since he knew as no man ever knew better, just what to do in such an emergency. If his pulse beat any faster because of this surprise neither his face nor his voice betrayed him; he drew up fresh divisions from the right, one after the other, and put them in where they could do the most good, whipped his enemy and was calm and imperturbable.

Thus, constantly extending his left as fresh troops came up, he crushed first Walker's Corps and then pulverized Cheatham's five brigades sent from the reserve by Bragg to stem the tide of reverse.

Crittenden presently opened up on the right and the fighting became general all along the line. When the battle first opened Thomas and Crittenden were not

joined, and the fact was sought to be taken advantage of by the enemy, who hurled a heavy force upon the weak point, and for a time it seemed that this movement would be successful—but, drawing first from the right of his own line and then from McCook, who, hearing the firing, was pressing up rapidly, Crittenden made good to hold his own against tremendous odds.

And this was the history of the day; monotonous enough in the telling, but filled with splendid, valorous deeds on both sides. Only once was the steady draft from the right to the left interfered with; and that was when some of Crittenden's men were overpowered by an unusually fierce and heavy onslaught, when Thomas withdrew Brannan and sent him, like an eddy against the current, to retrieve the damage, which he did, and then the fighting went on as before.

After nightfall Thomas readjusted his line, posting it more strongly; apprehending in the morning a fresh attack upon his flank. In making this readjustment he was again attacked and stubbornly engaged by Cleburn, the roar of the guns rising up among the hills like crashing peals of thunder, the burning powder weaving long lines of quivering flame in the velvet blackness of the glooming trees.

Further south Bragg tried to cross the stream at several points; but McCook's men were there, too surly and prompt to be trifled with.

The day thus ended with a defeat for Bragg. He had thrown himself with ponderous weight upon an enemy resolute and vigorous and implacable; and with the evening came the summing up, which showed nothing but the miscarriage of every move he had made and the loss of many brave men.

But he took courage and braced himself for the morrow's struggle; for he had not been routed even if he had suffered some, and he gained new strength with the accession of Longstreet with the remainder of his corps, before midnight.

And while the two armies lay within easy calling distance of each other in the darkness of the chilly night, breathing softly and moving noiselessly; while the living

cast up the uncertain reckoning of the morrow—for there was nothing certain about it all save its pallid uncertainties—while the dead lay in grotesque and horrible shapes and the wounded filled the dim vaults of the forest with their groans and sighs and imprecations and beseeching wails for water, the two commanders looked over the board, set their pieces anew, and planned the coming game.

Bragg divided his army into two wings, Polk to command the right and attack at daybreak; Longstreet to direct the left and to wait for the sound of Polk's guns when he, too, was to attack; and the whole line was to wheel to the left with Longstreet's left as the pivot; so that Rosecrans should be driven with each step, further and further away from Chattanooga and his base of supplies, and deeper and deeper into the heart of a hostile, inhospitable, and barren country.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TWENTIETH OF SEPTEMBER, 1863.

DURING the night of the 19th, Thomas retired his command (the left wing) some distance to the rear, giving it a position much stronger than the one darkness found it occupying, while he brought his divisions together into a closer and more compact line. The exigencies of the battle of the 19th put him in command of Johnson's division belonging to McCook's Corps and Palmer's division of Crittenden's Corps, in addition to which he had Baird's, Reynolds' and Brannan's divisions of his own corps; while one of his divisions, Negley's, had fallen temporarily under the command of McCook, on the right. Nothing illustrates more completely the extremity of the emergency brought about by Bragg's heavy and determined attack upon the left of Rosecrans' line on the 19th than this mixing up of troops from the three corps, to meet it. Rosecrans had his hands full in directing reinforcements to Thomas, and Thomas accepted everything that could be sent him, and, utilizing it, fought a heavy and bloody battle all day long, on a line varying from two to three miles in length.

It has been well described as a battle of charges and counter-charges.

Rosecrans on Saturday, from his post of observation at the Widow Glen's house—a point in the rear of the center of his line on the morning of the 19th, or a little to the left of the center, but in the rear of the center of the right wing in the evening—had before him a line of battle six or seven miles long, to watch.

I have often wondered whether civilians—and I have heard many of them talk learnedly of the fighting of

armies—can ever realize what it is to direct the movements of sixty or seventy or a hundred thousand men engaged in fierce battle? Just think of it for a moment, and take Chickamauga as an illustration. In his front and for a short distance to his right and left Rosecrans, as he stood in the shade of a clump of trees in the Widow Glen's dooryard, could see his troops surging to and fro, breaking and rallying, charging and retiring, in the thick woods and through the few open fields, beneath a cloud of smoke hovering low and white; and those whom he could thus see covered a part of his line which could not have been more than half a mile in extent. Miles away on his left a steady roaring told of heavy fighting; miles to his right an occasional outburst of wicked clangor gave indication of what might be a tremendous attack by the enemy there, while between these two extremes the rattling of small arms and the booming of great guns and volleys of cheers testified of warm work all along the line. The face of the country was broken, abounding in high hills, rounding off in knob shapes, rising into peaks or stretching out in ragged, oblong massiveness; deep ravines, sometimes almost chasms, and little strips of tilled fields comparatively level, alternated; and over all, save the bare fields, of course, sprang a dense growth of heavy forest trees with more or less underbrush. And stationed right in the middle of this, Rosecrans, as the commanding general, thus helpless and blind, was supposed to be responsible for everything that happened; upon hasty and brief communications from his subordinate commanders it was his business to keep in his mind's eye a picture of the whole field, and to issue orders which were supreme and beyond question or cavil, and if in his painful groping he made a mistake, as it would seem he could not well help doing, he would be held to rigid account and subjected to a censure so stern and unsparing that death itself would be almost preferable.

Thomas advised, at the council of war held by Rosecrans with his corps commanders at the Widow Glen's house Saturday night, that the entire army should be concentrated on the group of hills lying about a mile and a

half north of Lee and Gordon's mills, and through which the Lafayette road leading to the gap at Rossville ran, and which went trending south and west to the Dry Valley road leading to McFarland's Gap, with the reserve posted in the center of the rear upon the eastern slopes of the spurs and foothills of Missionary Ridge. This group of hills afterward became known as the "Horseshoe Ridge." Through the gaps in Missionary Ridge at Rossville and McFarland's lay the only roads to Chattanooga. The importance of defending them, as would have been possible if General Thomas' advice had been taken, is readily apparent. It was Rosecrans' business to hold them so that he could pass his army safely through the mountains to Chattanooga, while it was important to Bragg that they should be cut off so that he might be enabled to annihilate the Union forces. There is no question but that, if the army had been concentrated and placed upon this ridge which offered one of the strongest natural positions to be imagined, the result of Sunday's fighting would have been very different. But Rosecrans had established his field hospitals so far south as Crawfish Springs, and for this reason and perhaps other and stronger ones, he preferred to cover more territory than he would have done had he followed Thomas' advice. He made so much concession to Thomas, however, that he permitted that commander to put the bulk of his left and center (*i.e.*, the left and center of the left wing), very nearly on that part of the ridge which they would have occupied had Thomas' plan been fully carried out; but he threw the right (McCook) away off toward the south, whereby his line was weakened in proportion as it was extended.

Polk, commanding Bragg's right, was ordered on Saturday night to attack on Sunday at daybreak, but for some reason not clearly apparent unless it is true that he slept too late, he failed to open fire till 8:30 on that morning.

At 6 o'clock A.M. on the 20th, General Thomas notified Rosecrans that he had discovered a movement of the enemy to his left, toward the Rossville (Lafayette) road, and asked that his remaining division, (Negley's,) be sent to strengthen his flank. As the attack of the enemy

would come from the north, he proposed to place Negley facing toward that direction and almost at right angles with Baird, the next division on the right, facing east; at the same time he intended to place Negley's three batteries on the eastern slope of Missionary Ridge, so that their fire would enfilade Bragg's advancing column. Rosecrans at once ordered Negley to be sent from his place on the right, to Thomas, but for reasons not creditable to the parties concerned, chiefly negligence, only one brigade of the division, John Beatty's, obeyed the order, and with the exception of the Twenty-first Ohio of Sirwell's brigade the other two brigades did not reach that part of the field till long after the threatened attack had been repulsed; and when in point of fact they were worse needed on the right.

Beatty reached Thomas in time, but his one brigade made but a weak line in the space where Thomas had intended to put three such organizations. However, he did the best he could by way of getting Beatty into position, and then, like a wise man, pondered acutely while he waited for developments.

Our troops had made such breastworks during the night of Saturday as the means at hand would admit of. It was a heavily wooded country, but fallen timber and logs for such purposes were by no means plenty; there were very few fences even. But with such rails and stones and limbs of trees as they could lay hands on, the soldiers built breastworks; in some cases these structures were fairly presentable, but in most they were of but very little value indeed—frequently, for miles, not more than a foot high.

Bragg waited till long after daylight for his bishop-general to fall to at the Christian work of slaying his fellow-creatures, but the welcome sound of firing on the right was not heard. The good preacher-man had found a soft bed somewhere on the east side of the Chickamauga, it is said, and was evidently enjoying its comforts. That is, I suppose he was; no other explanation has ever been given of his prolonged absence from the field that morning.

He may have been praying to the Almighty to bless

and strengthen that day the arms and hearts of the army to which he belonged, to the end that the soldiers thereof might kill and maim their fellow-men to His glory and honor, and to the overthrow of His adversaries, world without end.

At all events this was the custom of the godly men in both armies, during those days; and within a mile of the Confederate communing confidentially with the Lord as to how He might best give His aid to the cause which He held dear, might have been seen the Union man likewise beseeching the loving All-Father to make the hills red with the blood of the rebels and fill the air with the groans of agony wrung from their maimed and torn bodies, also to the end that His glory and dominion and power and wisdom and truth and justice, and above all His tender mercy and loving kindness, might be shown to all peoples dwelling upon the earth.

Each of these persons, disregarding the consideration of the stronger battalions, knew, in his fervent piety, that the Lord was on his side, and that his enemies were the Lord's enemies. And without doubt each felt when he rose refreshed from his devotions and girded up his loins and went forth to murder his fellow-man, that he was doing God's service; and if perchance one of them fell, his soul flew to its eternal home through lips parted with the proud, ineffable smile of the martyr, who rejoices that he has been permitted to die that God's purposes might be established, and shed his life-blood that with it might be cemented the stately walls of His kingdom.

And yet neither of these men was insane.

At 8:30 the enemy advanced under cover of a cloud of skirmishers upon our left, and reaching the proper distance they fell with fury upon Beatty, breaking and driving him, and upon Baird, next to the right, where they were repulsed by a terrific fire from behind the breastworks, against which they could not stand. Rapidly following, Johnson, Palmer, and Reynolds, on Baird's right, were attacked, the enemy rushing in heavy masses upon the Union line, again and again, with a persistence that seemed almost hellish; but calmly and promptly our

men met and overthrew them, sending them back, actually reeling from the force of their repulse, with dreadful slaughter. On the extreme left, following up Beatty's slowly retreating and stubbornly fighting men, the Confederates crossed the Lafayette road and penetrated to the rear of Baird's division. Here they prepared with Breckinridge's Corps to assault from the rear, when Thomas gathering here and there a regiment from Johnson, a part of Stanley's brigade of Negley's division, one or two regiments of which by this time had arrived, with Vanderveer's brigade and Beatty's broken and scattered but plucky men, made such an onslaught upon the enemy that he drove him, flying for his life, around Baird's left, back to the front again.

For two hours Bragg pounded away at Rosecrans' left and center; bringing up fresh troops—and he seemed to have an unlimited supply—as fast as his assaulting columns were broken and demoralized, and showing the utmost determination to make a breach at this point in our lines. But it was without avail. Thomas was there; and that knowledge made each man in his line a heroic warrior and an immovable rock.

Meantime Longstreet had grown impatient, over on the rebel left, and at about 10:30 he moved forward to battle. He states that he assaulted in brigade formation, five brigades deep, massed, at half-distance, and that so soon as one brigade became demoralized another took its place, and so on.* Hood led this assault with his accustomed valor and dash, and it certainly was heavy and fierce enough to have taken a fort; and that it broke a thin line of unprotected men two ranks deep is not to be wondered at. The men on the right, as formed in the morning, had no protection of any sort to speak of.

As the assault grew heavy and hot on the left, Rosecrans became convinced that Bragg was simply renewing his attempt of the previous day to turn his left; he accordingly sent troops from his right over to Thomas, as rapidly as he could withdraw them and form new lines.

* Interview with Colonel Frank A. Burr, published April, 1883, in the Cincinnati *Enquirer*.

At 10:10 A.M. he wrote to McCook to "make immediate dispositions to withdraw the right, so as to spare as much force as possible to reinforce Thomas. The left must be held at all hazards, even if the right is drawn wholly back to the present left."

The right was weak and weakly posted, before a man had been sent to Thomas; it was not long till so many of McCook's men were withdrawn that that general was left with a command comprising only three brigades. In this emergency Crittenden's Corps, two divisions, in reserve on the eastern slope of Missionary Ridge, was called upon to strengthen McCook. Brannan's division lay somewhat in the rear of McCook's left, also in reserve, to the right of Reynolds, Thomas' right flank.

At about the time that Crittenden's reserves were moving forward to take places in McCook's line, General Wood, on Brannan's right, was ordered to close up on Reynold's right. The order was given because, Brannan's division being in echelon it was supposed to be out of the line, and that therefore it was necessary that Wood should touch Reynold's right to close up the gap. In literal obedience to this order, Wood moved his division by the left flank to the rear of Brannan, proceeding toward Reynolds, just as he (Wood) was coming under fire from Longstreet's advance. Into the gap thus left, and which Davis (Jeff. C.) hastened to try, but in vain, to fill with a brigade, poured six divisions of the rebel army.

A child seeing this situation would not need to be told what ensued; and to describe how each brigade and regiment and division was met and crushed by the Confederates in this part of the field would serve only to bewilder the reader, and perhaps drive him to one of the current maps of the battlefield of Chickamauga for enlightenment, whereupon may Heaven help him! He will save time to order a strait-jacket before he looks at the thing!

It is sufficient to say that the right was swept away, carrying with it off the field Crittenden's reserves; that Brannan fell back to a commanding hill a part of "Horse-shoe Ridge," afterward known to the rebels as "Battery Hill," where he took position on the right of Thomas'

line; that in turn some one ordered the Twenty-first Ohio to the hill on Brannan's right, and that here, with twenty thousand men posted on the "Horseshoe Ridge," where he wanted to put all of Rosecrans' army the night before, George H. Thomas, the "Rock of Chickamauga," confronted Bragg's howling and exultant legions and calmly bade them defiance, and, as the day wore on, resolutely whipped them, time and again, for four hours; until even Longstreet with his twenty-three thousand men pitted against the right of a line which altogether held only twenty thousand, was fain to call upon Bragg for reinforcements.

Begining at 11:30 o'clock in the morning when first placed in position, the Twenty-first Ohio held the right of the line till after 3 o'clock in the afternoon. At about 3 o'clock, the rebels sent a strong force (Hindman's division) upon the hill and in the ravine to the right of the Twenty-first, with the purpose of turning that flank and getting into the rear of Thomas' army—for with the disaster to the right wing Rosecrans, McCook, and Crittenden, believing that the day was lost, had retired to Chattanooga, leaving Thomas to hold alone the fate or fortune of the army in his own hands. The Twenty-first, perceiving this movement, swung its right wing backward, like a gate upon a hinge, the colors being the hinge, till it faced the enemy engaged in the flanking movement. Thus facing it poured into the advancing columns a terrific fire from its revolving rifles, and for some moments checked their advance. But the check would have been temporary and of little avail, and Thomas and his men would have been crushed and captured if help had not come from an unexpected source.

Now it is true that sometimes the most insignificant things, apparently done in the steady and unthinking way of routine, are of the utmost importance after all, and productive of results of great magnitude. Especially is this true of battles; and the true history of a great battle can never be written until all the details are known so that the real importance of minor movements in their bearing upon the ultimate result can be appreciated.

And while there are very few, perhaps, of the survivors

of the Twenty-first who will be able to recall, out of the number of maneuvers of that regiment on Sunday at Chickamauga, the fact that at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon the right wing of the regiment swung back as has been said, like a gate, so as to confront the enemy who had got footing on the hill to the right and rear of the regiment, and thus checked the advance of the rebels and held them for some minutes till Steedman's men in their immortal charge drove them back; yet it is true that the movement was made. No especial significance was given to it at the time, nor for a long time afterward when it came to be understood. Out of the numberless shiftings of the line of the regiment, to meet the exigencies of the struggle during the day, this one deserves to have a place by itself; because there can be no doubt but that it proved to be the salvation of the Army of the Cumberland on that field, just as much as Steedman's charge.

General Gordon Granger, commanding the Fourth Corps, lay with his men posted in and about Rossville Gap, two or two and a half miles distant. Between 2 and 3 o'clock of Sunday afternoon, hearing the continuous roar of the conflict and knowing that more than half of the army had been swept from the field, he judged that by advancing he might at least help the brave men caged and fighting there, out of a deadly peril. He therefore gave General James B. Steedman charge of two brigades, commanded respectively by General Walter C. Whittaker and Colonel (afterward General) John G. Mitchell, who started with them to the front. Arriving there and reporting to Thomas, he was found to have come opportunely, and he was ordered to charge Longstreet's flanking columns. This he did with such splendor of dash and courage as sent the rebels flying back over the hills to their old lines. Steedman then formed on the right of the Twenty-first, but with a long interval of at least an eighth of a mile between his left and the right of that regiment. In this interval was a deep ravine—one of those so deep and abrupt that it fairly deserved to be called a canyon or a chasm. And in this position Steedman fought, during the rest of the day.

Till dark, the story was the same; the rebels swept up in great masses of fiery, impetuous valor; the Union troops met them with a cool, steadfast courage which knew no thought of yielding; it was not until darkness began to settle down that the rebels seemed to weary in their strenuous endeavors. Before this the Union troops had exhausted their ammunition, even to that found on the bodies of the killed and wounded, and had settled down grimly and stubbornly to hold their position with the bayonet. At last they crept off the field, from a foe so badly injured that he scarcely raised a hand to molest them; and in the darkness of the night they silently plodded their way to the gaps at Rossville and McFarland's; and daylight found them, reunited, the awful gaps in their ranks closed up, with keen and steady eyes peering from beneath knit and lowering brows, alert and courageous, waiting and watching for a renewal of the assault the enemy had so reluctantly abandoned the night before.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COURAGE, THEN AND NOW.

THE quality of courage as displayed on the battlefield has changed since the days of "chivalry" as much, I am persuaded, as the manner of making war and fighting battles. At first blush it would seem in the old times when men fought chiefly at arm's length and hacked each other with keen swords and battered each other's brains out with great clubs stuck full of spikes, and gayly ran each other through the midriff with long spears, that despite the armor then worn by all fighting men the degree of courage requisite to sustain one in such encounters must have been much greater than is that demanded in these later days to enable a man to face an enemy a mile or half a mile off, popping away at him with a rifle. But I think that this is a mistake. The courage required in the olden times was very different and I think of a lower order; more like brute courage as distinguished from moral courage. In a hand to hand encounter a man is pretty apt to be brave in proportion as he has confidence in his own skill, and strength and weight and powers of endurance. None of these things will suffice to protect a man from the leaden pellet which, flying unseen, and until it has passed, unheard, searches out its victim and buries itself in the body before a warning of its approach has been had.

I have known men who would face a mob and whip a half a dozen men in a bout at fisticuffs who were the veriest cowards when bullets began to patter around them; and it seems to me that their courage was of the same sort that was chiefly in vogue in the good old days when all the danger a man should meet in battle was plainly before his eyes.

The bullet is like the assassin who lurks unseen to stab or crush his victim; and the bravest man threatened by the assassin may well admit that he trembles at heart thinking of his danger. Bullets are blind assassins, merciless and resistless. You may not hope to protect yourself against them. Though you have the strength of a Goliath and the nimble skill and quickness of a David you cannot escape nor secure yourself from the ball which has taken the line to your heart. So that a man in a modern battle is like one who walks amid thousands of unseen assassins.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A REGIMENT AT CHICKAMAUGA.

THE Twenty-first Ohio broke camp at Cave Springs, Alabama, on the evening of September 1st, for the twenty-two days campaign of marching and countermarching over mountain ranges and deep rivers and through fruitful valleys in a region where, at that time of the year the days are hot and dry and the roads dusty, and a dew like a rain falls at night, making it uncomfortably cold without a fire. The campaign comprised (in addition to small skirmishing scarcely worthy of record as being dwarfed out of sight by the greater events that marked the time) the affair at Dug Gap which was thrilling because of the narrow escape from a disaster which would have been without remedy, and the great battle on the banks of the deep, dark, sluggish, narrow stream whose name has become immortal.

During the afternoon of the 1st, the division was drawn up in line to witness a punishment novel to the men, inflicted upon two scoundrels, who had strayed from camp, entered a widow's house, and after compelling her to cook them a meal had stolen everything of value she had upon the premises. Their offense became known and they were promptly tried by court-martial, found guilty, and sentenced to have their heads shaved and to be paraded in irons before the entire division, then to be put at hard, menial labor with a ball and chain garnishment.

The day was bright and the men in fine humor. They were especially jubilant at the punishment of the reprobates who had brought disgrace upon all by their infamous conduct. When the little party came slowly

marching down the front, however, the guilty men, each with the half of his head shaved, escorted by a corporal's guard and the drums and fifes playing the "Rogue's March," the impression produced was painful in the extreme. The men stood absorbed, gazing on the humiliating spectacle, and so remained silent for some moments, and only found their tongues as they marched back to their now dismantled camp.

After a time, at last, the natural tendency to look on all sides of everything and to dwell especially upon the humorous view, asserted itself; and the bivouac resounded with rude impromptu verses sung to the air which most of them had heard that day for the first time; as, for example:

"Poor old soldier; poor old soldier;
Tarred and feathered and had his head shaved,
Because he wouldn't soldier ! etc.

"Poor old soldier; poor old soldier;
Tarred and feathered and sent to h—l,
Because he wouldn't soldier !" etc.

The Tennessee was spanned at Caperton's Ferry by a pontoon bridge, upon which the regiment, breaking step, rapidly crossed by moonlight.

Then, as they filed up the bluff bank and took the road on the south side of the river, a whistler in Company "A" suddenly broke silence with the new air, blithe and gay as a robin in spring-time. Instantly the point was appreciated and other whistlers joined in, till swiftly trailing down the whole line of the regiment the "Rogue's March" was shrilling forth from hundreds of puckered mouths, while every man, from marching at will and carrying his rifle as it pleased him, took step to the music, brought his gun to a "right shoulder shift" and "dressed to the left." So, for a mile or more perhaps, they marched proudly onward as if on review, their eyes dancing with the fun of the thing, while their officers laughed in sympathy.

In an ordinary emergency one would have regarded it

as a job to be thought twice of, to attempt in those days to cross either the Big Raccoon or Lookout Mountain on horseback; and to cross with a four-wheeled vehicle was something you would have preferred to let your neighbor essay.

For the most part the road was little more than a bridle-path, thickly strewn with bowlders, in size from the "nigger-head" up to rocks weighing thousands of pounds; the forest growth was almost as thick in the so-called road as on either side, while the ascent was very steep from the foot to the top of the mountain; so that, even after the men had cleared away the trees and saplings with axes, and had rolled the huger bowlders aside with improvised levers and much pushing of bony shoulders, and had, with spades and picks, leveled up the chasms torn across the trail by fierce mountain torrents—even after all this had been done it was beyond the greatest resources of the teamster's objurgatory art to compel the four mules to pull a loaded wagon more than a few feet at a time up the precipitous incline without help. And this help was given by hitching a long rope to the wagon, to which the men attached themselves, and bending their backs with much good-humored and bad-humored shouting and joking and panting and puffing and blowing they brought the wagons, and the artillery limbers as well to the top. And while the work done by the Twenty-first as to road-making was availed of by the regiments that followed, yet the least that each had to do was most laborious and painful.

Among the triumphs of modern warfare certainly deserves to be ranked the performance of the brigade to which the Twenty-first belonged in turning a small, rude sawmill into a bridge, on this march; and so substantial a structure was it that the whole of the Fourteenth Corps, horse, foot, and artillery, men and teams, passed successfully over it.

Made up of men of all avocations, there was nothing which the Army of the Cumberland could not do, from the production of a Latin thesis or the translation of the Iliad down to the building of a bridge on the most scientific principles or the courageous fighting and winning of battles.

A man catches his breath at a sudden and unexpected volley, very much as he does at his first plunge into a river whose water is of lower temperature than his body. This was what the Twenty-first did when, moving somewhat carelessly, in line of battle front, it was first notified one day that the passage of Pigeon Gap would be disputed, by receiving a rattling, ripping volley from a regiment of Confederate cavalry dismounted and concealed behind a stone fence at the foot of a gentle slope, the top of which had just been gained by the regiment. Then the men smiled apologetically at each other, and turned to cheer their gallant comrades from the left of the brigade, who, with an impulsive charge, drove the Johnnies from their protection and sent them clattering off on their horses.

But the incidents of the affair at Dug Gap have already been treated of sufficiently, and no remark is needed here save to record the wonderful confidence of the men in General Thomas. During the suspense as to what would be the result of the gathering of the Confederates on all sides (their motions could easily be followed by the clouds of dust which they raised), there were two nights when from extreme anxiety no man slept except in cat-naps—but when on the morning of the third day the word was passed from mouth to mouth, “There’s old pap!” they laid down and fell asleep in broad day to make up the loss, all uneasiness having been banished at once by the sight of George H. Thomas in their midst.

So we will pass over the monotonous days between the 12th and the 19th of September as presenting nothing that ought to take up our time, except the patient endurance of the men who knew, or thought they knew that so long as “Old Pap” was with them no great harm could come to them. And we can see that their faith was well placed when we remember that with any other commander Rosecrans would have sent them, to be crushed, into the very heart of Bragg’s large and daily increasing army.

During nearly all of the 19th the Twenty-first was kept away off to the right to guard against an assault from that direction. From the point where they lay, on the

brow of a hill above the stream, they could see the dust cloud which marked the line of Longstreet's men coming to the front, and the steady shifting of Bragg's heavy forces from his left to his right; and they could hear the almost continuous roar of the battle on their left which told that Bragg was trying to repeat in the Georgia Mountains the success he had achieved among the tangled thickets of Middle Tennessee in the previous December. But the man who was in command of the Union left at Chickamauga was not the man who commanded the Union right at Stone River; which fact made a material difference in the chances of the battle.

As the hours wore on the fighting on the left seemed to grow more fierce and intense, and toward the last half of the afternoon the regiment was moved slowly toward the firing. At last it was put to a double-quick which was maintained for several miles and until it had reached the fighting front proper. Here it was formed in line of battle and sent charging across the Lafayette road into a body of woods, where it was received with a volley which added speed and determination to its onset. The result, however, was nothing more than a loss of two men killed and three wounded on the part of the regiment; but it is believed that the boldness of the movement checked an advance of the enemy which might have proved important.

Here followed a night almost beyond description, so dread and awful and uncanny was it. I know that it is neither in my ink-bottle nor the sense that guides my pen to give readers who have not gone through a similar experience any idea of what it was. But it may be that the old soldier who reads will fill up the gap from his own recollection of such things.

When the regiment at last halted, and was told that it should remain there for the night, darkness had set in. Although it was coming on to be bitter cold it was ordered that no fires should be lighted, nor any blankets unrolled save the rubber abominations which may have been impervious to water, but were at the same time no more comforting than the smooth side of a tombstone in January. The men were ordered to get together what-

ever they could to make a protection for themselves, but the scarcity of materials and the gloom of the wood prevented them from constructing anything more than a line scarcely more than a foot high, and therefore of no use if a man tried to be of any service in loading and firing; since every movement would bring some part of his person above the line of protection.

And it was not long after they had settled down to their uncomfortable and hungry vigil before, through the silence in their front, they heard voices, at first lifted in giving command, and then falling to a lower and less peremptory tone. When they came to understand it, they found that the enemy were bivouacked for the night so near that a conversation could be carried on between the two armies without much raising of the voice. The enemy must have made the same discovery at much the same time, for instantly shots came singing at every head that was exposed on the line of the Twenty-first. Our men, however, made little or no reply, as they had learned not to shoot until they were sure they could hit something—which meant somebody. So that they very intelligently flattened themselves out as well as they could; and burrowing their noses into the inhospitable soil of Georgia, they wisely determined for the time being to make as little stir in the world as possible. But as there was everything to suggest the possibility of a sudden attack upon them they closed neither eye nor ear till daybreak.

As all there knew that a terrible conflict was impending which might begin in five minutes and which they thought could not possibly be postponed longer than daylight (for they had not heard of Bishop Polk's good luck in finding a soft bed), and as no man could form a better notion as to what the result of that conflict would be, so far as he was personally concerned, than to make up his mind that the chances were nine out of ten against his getting out with a whole skin, it will be seen that there was every reason why they should be filled with the most serious thoughts that can ever come to men. And, truly, before twenty-four hours had passed, over half of their number were either killed, wounded, or prisoners.

As things settled down for the night and quiet began to prevail it was found that they were lying on the confines of the battlefield of the day, and that between them and the enemy lay quite a number of wounded men, whose groans and moans and wailing cries for water made the hour and the scene only more solemn and suggestive.

One wounded man in particular was determined to make himself heard, and momentarily grew more clamorous with his shrieks and groans, mingled with bitter imprecations upon those who might come to his rescue but would not—for he well knew that on either hand and clearly within earshot lay hundreds if not thousands of human beings. His accent plainly proclaimed him a Johnnie, and it was naturally supposed that his gray-coated friends would go to minister to him; but as, time going on, it was found that they were for some reason not disposed to do so, the men of the Twenty-first determined to attempt the merciful errand. Taking a blanket to serve as a stretcher they cautiously made their way to the sufferer, guided by his voice which was now continuous in reproach, till at last, spite of the shots that were fired at them they brought him safely off to the rear of their line.

Here they could not, in the dark and not being able to see where his hurts were, do him much good; but what they could they did. He had been wounded in several places and spite of all they could do they could not help hurting him as they moved him about. And he was evidently suffering intense pain. But the matter of the remarks he had to offer upon things of immediate interest was most extraordinary. He talked between groaning paroxysms and by agonized jerks, and with the most fluent profanity:

"It were good of you all to come out after me—and—let go of my leg, stranger—you're a-killin' of me! Water, for God's sake! Thank ye! I'll never forgit ye for this, Yanks! You've done me a good turn, and I'll never forgit ye for it! Oh, my God, I wish I could die! I don't see why sich misery don't kill me—it ought to! God in heaven, my friend! what do ye mean—don't

tech me, I say! You all got the best of it to-day, but to-morrow by—there won't be a corp'ral's guard left o' ye! Longstreet got hyar to-day, ye shad-bellied——and he'll whip—out o' ye to-morrow! Water, water, why don't ye gimme water?"

And so on, for a long time he mingled abuse and gratitude and curses and prayers in a mosaic that was horribly grotesque. The good fellows around him took no offense from his bitter cursing, rather admiring his grit and laughing as they understood that while he was no whit ungrateful he could not help glorying over the defeat he saw in store for them the following day. At last they got leave and carried him back to the field hospital where his wounds were dressed.

Poor Charlie Allen! the captain of Company "D," who had scarcely recovered from the three wounds he had received at Stone River nearly a year before, and had rejoined the regiment only in time to take part in the campaign. Who could blame him that he sat all the cold, dark night through, praying that he might not be wounded again—that if he were hit at all, the ball should put an end to his life? Who could blame him as he looked back over the long hours and days that he had passed in prolonged pain on the hospital cot, if he thought that death itself would be preferable?

And as the regiment formed its line under fire the next morning the first volley that came sent a ball into the poor fellow's body! And the last glimpse had of him showed his face pale and drawn, as, just before his doom came, he looked for it with eyes filled with a strained apprehension. And for fifteen long, weary months he languished and suffered from that shot, till at last it killed him; but not until he had felt all that he had feared.

When the gray light of the morning of the 20th came it showed that the enemy had silently withdrawn from the front of the Twenty-first, and the men began to have some freedom of action. An ominous quiet reigned everywhere, and all ears were set to catch the first rumblings of the awful storm which every one knew might break forth at any moment. But it was a long wait—till

8:30 o'clock, when the crash came on the left which showed that Bragg was still determined to find his victory there.

Then for over two hours the Twenty-first was shifted hither and thither on the double-quick, continually flying from point to point all over the field and never resting anywhere, but constantly bearing to the left. Finally, it was turned sharply off toward the right wing, and traversing the open end of what was afterward known as the "Horseshoe," it took its destined place and began its important work.

As it went nimbly up the hill it was met by Colonel Walker, serving temporarily on Brannan's staff, by whom it was warmly adjured to "never give up the hill." There was no further relaxing of soldierly rigidity among the men than a mere twinkle of the eye as they quietly replied "All right, colonel;" and as they deployed into line they looked down for a brief moment upon the rebels who were pouring a hot musketry fire into them; as a man takes time to measure his antagonist while he pulls off his coat and prepares to pulverize him. Then, the line being satisfactorily adjusted, they went to firing with disciplined coolness and deadly accuracy till the enemy was at last compelled to turn tail. Then they took time to look at each other and mop their faces as they remarked:

"First knock-down for the Twenty-first! Reckon there's no water within a thousand miles of this hill!"

Their rest was not for long; for so soon as they had repulsed one brigade, Longstreet sent up another against them; and so they fought till 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Now just after the battle of Stone River, the authorities, seeing the good stuff there was in the regiment, had thought of making mounted infantry of it; and, as the first step, had begun to issue Colt's revolving rifles to the men, so that seven of the ten companies were equipped with this formidable arm at the battle of Chickamauga. This rifle was made on the same principle as the Colt's revolver, was furnished with a bayonet and could be loaded as quickly almost, in all its five chambers, as the muzzle-loading Enfield rifles with which the remaining

three companies went into the fight. The result was that at first the charging enemy, reaching the proper distance and receiving a volley from the regiment, returned the same and then started on the keen jump satisfied they could reach the blue-coats before they could reload; before, however, they had advanced ten paces they would get another volley, and while they were pondering on this circumstance still a third; then they would scarcely get their backs turned before the fourth would catch them and when on a dead run for home base, the fifth came singing among them, they began to think that certainly old Satan was in it!

Once only during the day the regiment moved forward slightly, but finding the position not so good it slowly returned to the top of the hill, up which the rebels came manfully advancing with the regularity of a swinging pendulum. In falling back, the guns which had become heated and foul from much use, spouted forth fire which in time ignited the dry leaves and undergrowth, starting a blaze of no mean proportions but still not great enough to interfere with the fighting. Scattered over the space which was thus burning and smoking lay quite a number of wounded men belonging to the regiment, and soon their cries for relief became almost appalling as the agony of being roasted was added to the pain they suffered from their bleeding wounds. Volunteers rushed forward and drew the poor fellows back; but some of them were piteously burned, with the white, cooked flesh peeling back from their charred finger bones and great flakes falling off their cheeks.

In all their fighting there was only one case that can be recalled, where any man in his senses displayed even a little bravado or anything like buncombe if indeed he did.

The excitement of battle sometimes drives men insane, as it did at least two of the Twenty-first. The first one was a fairly good soldier apparently well balanced and he certainly was not a coward; but he had not been under fire half an hour before he became a raving maniac. There was this method in his madness, however, that he never ceased to fight: only he ceased to fight intelli-

gently. He ran far out in advance of the regiment and taking his position by the side of a tree, loaded and fired furiously, all the time shouting and yelling and turning to taunt his comrades with vile profanity, calling them cowards because they would not come forward to join him. Neither coaxing nor threats served to bring him back to his place, and at last his madness became such a painful exhibition of gibbering apishness that his death was a welcome relief; if one may say such a thing.

Another man had two or three fingers shot off his right hand, and he instantly flashed into temporary insanity. He cursed and reviled the enemy with the most opprobrious epithets that ever came from man's worst imagination, dancing and gyrating almost comically with pain. Then he sought a wounded companion who, lying upon the ground, could load his rifle for him. Thus aided he kept firing and shouting and cursing till the loss of blood made him faint; when he was persuaded to go to the rear.

After the fighting had been going on for two or three hours, the commander of one of the companies suddenly missed one of his men, a great, tall, strong fellow whose absence let a great hole for the daylight in his ranks. Inquiring and looking around for him, he at last found him about ten feet in the rear of the company, lying prone on his face, behind a tree.

"Why, Blank, what is the matter with you?"

The man raised his face; every spark of reason had fled from it; it was pallid and sickening with fear:

"I'm wounded—I'm wounded," he jabbered.

"Where?"

"Right here—right here—right here!" placing his finger on his forehead where the skin was not only not broken but free from any sort of discoloration or swelling.

"What do you mean, Blank? You're not wounded! How dare you tell me such a lie?"

"I am! I am! I tell you I am! I tell you I am!"

"Come, come; I'll have no more of this nonsense! Get back to your place—get back, I say! For shame!"

"But I can't, captain, I can't! I tell you I'm wounded—I'm wounded—right here—right here—right here!"

"Get back to your place," and the officer smote him sharply with his sword. "Get back, I say!"

"Oh, captain, for God's sake, don't! For God's sake don't! I'm wounded!" and the piteous wretch begged frantically as the officer slowly drove him back to his place. He was unhurt, as sound in body as ever a man was; and had demonstrated in more than one hard fight the possession of the highest courage.

"Now get to work, and let me hear no more of your absurd notions!" said the captain, as he turned to look after the rest of his men.

His order was obeyed. With a look so full of utter despair that it might have broken a heart of stone as he gazed toward the enemy the poor fellow got to work, loading and firing calmly and effectively and speaking no word.

Ten minutes afterward the captain coming again in haste to the head of the company stumbled over a dead body. Looking down, his glance met the stony, staring gaze of poor Blank! He was dead—shot through the heart!

But there were perhaps not a half dozen men in the entire regiment (and with one exception the Twenty-first was the largest regiment in the Army of the Cumberland engaged in the battle of Chickamauga) who were not thorough masters of themselves.

They were of two sorts, of course, as to courage. Some men grow careless of danger from becoming habituated to it, and others do not. So, some here, having gone through several battles without hurt, had come to have a sort of a belief in their luck which made them reckless and cool and daring. Others, from being so often under fire and each time seeing danger take new forms (for even in the killing and maiming no two battles are alike), and from the very fact that they had hitherto escaped, argued that their time would certainly come in the next engagement, and so went in with that heaviness of heart which such an apprehension must always bring. And I am persuaded that ninety out of every hundred of the Twenty-first that day believed, as they had good reason, that they would be hurt in one way or another.

This may have had a tendency to make them less reckless, but they were certainly no less cool nor daring than their comrades who felt a sustaining confidence in their luck.

To repulse a heavy charge seems a very different thing when looked at on paper from what it is on the field of battle. And the old soldiers will understand that in each charge which the Twenty-first met that day there came a moment when the pressure seemed intolerable and not to be resisted any longer; when the heart would almost give way and the brain would fairly reel at the thought that after all they must yield! How many times that feeling came to the Twenty-first that day cannot be told (for who was there to number the assaults that were so continuous that they might almost have been counted as one) but whenever the supreme moment came there was each time found a reserve force of stubborn determination to hold on a little longer, and that always won the fight. Their assailants might fall back but a little way and then, re-forming and reloading, return to the onset with fresh vigor and a stronger will to succeed, and thus hurl themselves again upon the scant line of blue-coats, and being checked again, would merely halt and pour volley after volley into the ranks of their opponents; but in the end the result was always the same. The Twenty-first would hold on just a moment too long, that moment which was always the decisive one; and then the Confederates would have to turn their backs, retrace their steps, and re-form their shattered ranks while others, fresh and untouched as yet, were sent to try to accomplish what they had failed to do.

And so it was that the rebels, as was not only demonstrated by the way in which they behaved later in the day, but as was also learned from statements made by Longstreet's men themselves, came to regard the hill with a feeling not unmingled with superstitious dread and awe as having a mystery belonging to its impregnable strength and were convinced that at least a division of well equipped troops held it. And the little thin line which did hold it, for the hill was large, and in order to cover it the men were much scattered, and not elbow to elbow by any means—the men of the thin line, as with

each assault their numbers grew less even so their courage mounted and they grew more determined with each repulse, till they were got at that pitch that if they had known that all of Bragg's army was moving in mass against them they would have met the host with unshaken nerves.

And thus the day wore on till 3 o'clock and the ammunition was getting low, as was natural when outside the regiment there was no one to see to supplies—for the Twenty-first fought "on its own hook." But there were all the elements of Providence (in one sense of the word) in the regiment; and cool men went back from time to time for cartridges and returned in order with the little heavy lead-colored boxes upon their shoulders. The peculiar ammunition belonging to the revolving rifles was of course soon exhausted, for, of course again, some fool who had lost his wits at the time the right wing of the army was stampeded had taken it upon himself to order the wagons back; but it was soon found that, although the ball made for the Enfields was a trifle large, yet it could be made to serve in the revolvers, and it was accordingly so used. Only, in less time than it takes to write it, the men found that in using the Enfield cartridge the bayonet must be kept on the revolver, else it would split at the muzzle. And the men armed with Enfields exchanged them for the more formidable weapon as fast as the sad casualties of the conflict gave them opportunity.

It was at 3 o'clock or a very few minutes after, that it was discovered that the enemy had gained the hill on the right and were sending a hot cross fire into the right wing of the regiment. Union troops had at one time during the day been on the hill on the right, but none had been there for an hour or two, and Longstreet seemed to have been so intent up to this moment upon taking the hill occupied by the Twenty-first by direct assault as never to have taken time to think of flanking it. There were no field officers on the right when this discovery was made, and the importance of doing something at once was so great that Captain Harvey H. Alban of Company "F," the senior officer of the right wing being au-

thorized by Major McMahan to use his discretion took the responsibility upon himself of ordering the movement. It was made with coolness, the men facing the foe and fighting as they slowly moved back, until they had got into the new position, the right wing formed at almost right angles with the left; the distance traversed was not great and the angle thus formed was not a sharp one. The rebels assaulted with great vigor, coming at one time up to within thirty feet of the Union line. How long the right wing could have thus held the enemy need not be speculated upon, since happily, before they had begun to yield at all, Steedman's men came up in the most gallant and spirited charge that the day had seen and swept on and over the regiment, driving the enemy far back upon his rear, and there held him for the better part of an hour, during which the Twenty-first had time to recuperate, redress its line and prepare for more fighting.

Finally Steedman aligned himself on the right, uncovering the front of the Twenty-first and the regiment was called upon to resume business at the old stand; which it did with an imperturbable air as if it had never thought of doing anything else; and the old routine that had filled the day was begun again.

When, late in the evening, two regiments sent to relieve the Twenty-first got upon the ground they were not a moment too soon, for the regiment was almost entirely out of ammunition, and was doing business more upon the good will of the concern than anything else; if such a commercial phrase may be used to designate the wholesome respect for the place which they had been enabled to instill into the bosoms of their adversaries, and which for a time served as a protection to them.

The top of the hill formed a sort of an uneven plateau, perhaps a hundred yards or more in width, and sloping to the north nearly to the Dry Valley road, and to the east toward the inside of the "Horseshoe." When the Twenty-first was relieved it was marched across this plateau and over the rear-most edge, and put in position slightly to the right of the reinforcements, where the men sheltered from fire lay down to await developments.

Longstreet opened upon the new troops hotly and fiercely, and soon word was sent back to send up such men of the Twenty-first as had ammunition, that all the strength on the hill might be made available. The few who were thus supplied, went up, accompanied by officers.

Very soon after this, as the enemy in a long, compact, and well kept line, were discerned coming up to the charge, paying no heed to the frantic firing of the fresh troops, a man was seen to spring out in advance of them. He was unarmed, clad in the Confederate uniform and quick of foot as a deer. As he approached the Union line, swinging his hat, he yelled constantly, "Cease firing! Cease firing!"

The men looked at each other in surprise, not knowing what this might mean, and in the uncertainty thus engendered, the firing slackened up and had truly almost ceased by the time the daring messenger had reached the Union commander to explain his errand and give an account of himself. The substance of what he had to say was that a large body of the enemy was coming up the hill to surrender, and he bore the request of their commander that the Union troops should cease firing, in order to enable them to do so. The order was accordingly given; and it is too late to spend breath in criticizing the judgment of the Union commander, whose name I have never heard.

The Confederates came steadily up the hill, amid a silence at once grown so profound that their measured tread and the rustling of the bushes as they marched could be plainly heard although they were still distant. The messenger himself quietly laid down upon his face behind a large tree, very near to the front of the Union line.

It was clear that he was well chosen. He was perhaps not more than twenty years old, rather tall but by no means awkward, lean and lithe and quick as a cat. As he lay there his face glowed with the activity of his mind, and his eyes darted hither and thither, taking in every feature of the scene, and on the alert for whatever might happen.

Lieutenant Lamb of the Twenty-first stood near this

keen-eyed fellow, and after observing him for a moment, said to an officer at hand:

"The Johnnies are not going to surrender. They are deceiving us!"

The quick eyes of the envoy flashed in Lamb's face for an instant, and then turned elsewhere.

"I reckon our colonel knows his business," answered the officer somewhat stiffly.

Lamb looked again at the messenger, then at the rapidly nearing line of Confederates, and then back at the boy so coolly kicking his heels under the tree.

"Well, it's my private opinion that your colonel's a—fool," he replied, as he turned away. "Come on, boys, let's go back—I'm not going to let you be taken prisoners!" and collecting the men of the Twenty-first he went quietly back to his regiment.

He had scarcely got there when voices were heard at the front in excited question and reply, and then came a tremendous volley followed by a wild cheer, and hundreds of men came fleeing back over the hill, for their lives.

Observing that the Confederates who were represented to be so anxious to surrender were still bearing their arms, the Union commander, so soon as they came within hailing distance, had called out:

"Lay down your arms if you wish to surrender!" a request by no means out of place, one would say.

And what, think you, was the reply of those sons of Belial?

"Go to —, you Yankee——!"

Then followed the volley, the rush up the hill, and—it was taken!

And now we have to be thankful for an unexpected mercy, for if the Confederates had pushed on they would have had the Dry Valley road and got inside the "Horse-shoe"—and where it all would have ended, who can tell?

But they did not push on. A sudden access of caution came to say to them that the surprising ease with which this stubborn hill had yielded at last was a most suspicious circumstance, and needed consideration. It looked devilishly like a trap! Who could tell? This hill had

been defended all day with a pertinacity which made it a dreadful place, and now, all at once, its defense was abandoned! What was the explanation of all this?

So, thus debating and considering, the Confederates resolutely clung to the southern edge of the plateau, and would not budge a step forward.

Meantime the commander of the two flying regiments called to Major McMahan, then in command of the Twenty-first, Lieutenant-Colonel Stoughton having been wounded some hours before.

"Take your regiment," he said, "and make a charge and retake the hill! We will rally and re-form and support you!"

There were not two hundred of the Twenty-first in fighting trim then on the hill—two hundred more of them lay there, however, dead, dying, and wounded.

"We have no ammunition—" began McMahan, more in explanation than objection.

"But you have your orders!" responded the colonel pompously, as becomes a man who must do something to hide his chagrin at his own blunder.

"Very well, sir," said the major, and turning he called the men of the Twenty-first to their feet.

A few moments were spent in searching the cartridge boxes of the dead and dying strewn over the hillside, and finally one round to the man was secured.

Then the little band, sturdy and cool and willing, set forward, showing much less than a two company front to charge at least three thousand victorious Confederates, grimly waiting for them.

The first faint shades of the evening were gathering, and in the ravines the fleecy fog was beginning to rise. The roar of the day's long combat had about ceased, and a palpitating silence, surcharged with dreadful chances, hung over all of the field, only broken now and then by the sharp rattle of a half dozen muskets, as prowling parties of adventurous enemies came into contact. And elbow to elbow, without speaking a word, the men of the Twenty-first pressed up the hill.

Arrived at the top they halted for an imperceptible moment to redress their line; and then, delivering their

volley into the faces of the Confederates who were almost near enough to shake hands with them, they brought down their pieces and, with a firm cheer, started on the double-quick for closer work.

Of course it was an utterly useless movement; and in almost less time than it takes to write it, the numerous, compact, and well-equipped Confederates had repulsed them and sent them whirling. Only a man who was maddened with shame at his own incompetency, would have sent them up there on such a desperate and useless errand. And only troops who were disciplined to obey orders so long as they had one man to place in front of another, would have thought of trying it a second time. But they did it. Closing up the gaps they charged twice again, with not even a shot to fire!

Before they could rally to go up the hill the fourth time, the colonel commanding the two regiments that had relieved them, sent word to "lie down and await the re-formation of his men," when, united, a last grand effort would be made. But it was decreed otherwise.

The men lay down almost without a word, and let the chill influence of the awful quiet about them work upon them to dishearten them if it could. Presently an old white-haired man, straight and almost as thin as a flag-staff, suffering from a slight wound but still full of fight, broke out in a strain of heroic assertion:

"I love the old flag! I would be willing to die for the old flag!"

"There! Let up on that; this is no Fourth of July business!" said one of his comrades sharply but quietly. The old man looked about him and saw that the men approved his quietus, and he sat down with no more words.

Presently, a line was seen filing in through the depths of the great ravine on the right—a long line of soldiers carrying their muskets at a right-shoulder-shift, marching "left in front," and making no noise. The fog distorted them somewhat, but they seemed to be in dark uniforms, and they came from the direction in which Steedman's brigades had gone. As they slowly moved along and finally came to a front facing the Twenty-first, they showed up at least two thousand men.

The men of the Twenty-first regarded them with a curiosity that was almost listless, and calmly debated as to who they were, some maintaining that they were rebels, who, acting with those who had just taken the crest of the hill, were about to fall upon our right and crush it; while others, arguing from the color of their uniforms and the direction from which they came, were as strongly impressed that they were Union troops. After facing to the front they slowly moved up the hill, marching in line with a precision that would have been creditable on a grand parade or review; and all that could be heard was the occasional word of command or caution "Dress on the center!" "Steady there!" in a tone that seemed suppressed and guarded.

At last Captain Alban determined to know who they were. So announcing, he plunged down the hill, and was soon lost to view.

Presently, hearing nothing from the captain, a sergeant of Company "D" said to his commander:

"I think I will go and see who they are."

"I'd rather you wouldn't, Bob; the thing looks very dangerous. I'm afraid we would lose you."

A pause ensued.

"Well," resumed the sergeant, "somebody ought to take the risk, and I might as well do it as anybody. May I go?"

"I don't like to see you go, but you may do as you please;" and shouldering his piece the brave young fellow stepped blithely off, for all the world as if he were going a-squirrel hunting as he used to do in the Putnam County woods.

And so he was lost to view, as Captain Alban had been; and from neither of them came back a word or a cry to tell what they had found.

As Alban moved forward he was lost to the sight of his comrades some time before he reached the mysterious column. He pursued his way calmly till he got near enough to make himself heard without yelling; then he asked:

"What troops are you?"

In an instant a gun was put to his head:

"Git back hyar in the rear; an' ef ye open yer head we'll blow yer brains out!"

And what had happened to him happened in like manner to the sergeant.

At last a man in the Twenty-first, raising his voice, hailed them:

"What troops are you?"

The reply came promptly:

"Jeff Davis' troops."

Now as the Union general, Jeff. C. Davis had, in the early part of the day, been on the right with his division, it was thought at once that the ghostly column was made up of his command; and the men lapsed again into quiet but eager watchfulness. And so the line came steadily on, and the scene each moment grew more weird and impressive.

Suddenly from the Twenty-first the command, rang out, sharp and clear:

"Fire!"

Now who it was that gave the command or why he should do so, has never been found out; since there was not a cartridge in any man's gun or box; but it had a prompt and most decided effect; for, instantly the approaching column lay down and seemed to melt and disappear into the earth.

Then, waiting for the fire which they had expected, and hearing no sound, the troop of ghosts sprang to their feet, delivered a crashing volley, and charged on and up wildly and furiously.

It was quick work. At least a third of those present of the Twenty-first were captured, with their colors, the rest saving themselves by flight.

Ten minutes afterward a lieutenant of the Twenty-first found a handful of the men of his regiment on the hill to the left, where Brannan's division lay. The sally of the enemy on the right with its noise of firing had awakened a feeble renewal of the battle along the entire line. Meeting the colonel who had cheered the regiment on to their work in the morning (Moses B. Walker of the Thirty-first Ohio), the lieutenant said:

"We have been driven from our hill at last, sir; I have

six or eight men here, we have no ammunition, but if you can use us—why, here we are.”

“Go up to the front,” was the reply. “We are out of ammunition, too, and we are holding the hill at the point of the bayonet.”

But before the lieutenant with his squad had gone far, orders were received to fall back, and the entire division was put in motion toward Rossville. Colonel Walker gathered some thirty or forty of the Twenty-first together and led them back in the sad retreat through the black night among the rugged hills.

Shortly after daylight the regiment, numbering less than two hundred, and without field officer or colors, stood aligned upon a hill at Rossville, when the general commanding the division came dashing up. He glanced sharply at the feeble line and then demanded in a peremptory tone:

“What troops are these?”

“This is the Twenty-first Ohio, sir,” was the response.

“My God! The Twenty-first Ohio! It cannot be possible!”

And at the sight of the wreck of what had been his finest regiment, he seemed utterly overcome. And as his tears ran down his face, the men were touched, and almost began to think whether they would not forgive him for having gone off with the rest of the division, deserting them and leaving them to their fate the day before.

NOTE.—The position of the Twenty-first Ohio on Sunday was on Brannan's right, and for the greater part of the day this regiment formed the extreme right flank of the Union Army. On the right of the regiment loomed a great hill, separated from that on which the regiment fought by a very deep ravine running back to the Dry Valley road a quarter of a mile in the rear of the regiment. Early in the day the only other road upon which the Army of the Cumberland could retreat to Chattanooga, the Rossville road, was cut off by the enemy, so that this Dry Valley road was of the highest importance, and it is surely not saying too much of the situation to say that the Twenty-first held the key to it. Had Long-

street's swarming brigades once driven the regiment back all would have been lost. And during all of that day of carnage, from 11 o'clock in the morning till 5 in the evening, that regiment saw no officer superior in rank to its own lieutenant-colonel, and it fought under but one order, received as it filed up the hill in the morning—and that order was "Take position on the hill and hold it at all hazards." The order was obeyed without question, appeal for help, or thought of yielding, and at a cost of a loss of more than half the force that went into the fight. There were sixteen officers and five hundred and thirty-five men on the morning of the 20th when the regiment formed line under fire; there were but five officers and less than two hundred men for duty on the morning of the 21st when the shattered ranks of the regiment were drawn together into the space of a two-company front.

The regiment fought without the supervision of any officer higher than its own lieutenant-colonel, who was wounded and carried from the field just as his men performed their most important service.

Formal history has this to say: "At 3 p.m. General Longstreet, despairing of carrying the position without reinforcements, called upon General Bragg for assistance from his right. He was informed that the troops of their right wing 'had been so badly beaten back' that they would be of no service on the left. Ascertaining thus that the right of his own army was in little better condition than the original right of the National Army, Longstreet hesitated to put into the fight his reserve division, and renewed the assault with the troops that had been repeatedly repulsed. In this charge, the rebel General Hindman, commanding on the extreme left, gained a temporary advantage, which induced Longstreet to put his reserve division into the action in hope of sweeping the hills before him."

Right here pause may be taken to say that the "advantage" which was "gained" by Hindman was in getting his troops across the right flank of the Twenty-first Ohio, which was instantly met by the swinging back of the right wing of that regiment as has been described.

The historian continues: "But before he could get Preston's large division into line" (during which time the Twenty-first was holding Hindman at bay), "Hindman was driven from the hill above Villetoe's, upon which he had planted his banners, by Steedman's brigades."

There is the story in a nutshell. But for the check and repulse which Hindman received from the Twenty-first, he would have been with other divisions of Longstreet's wing, across the Dry Valley road and in the rear of the cramped little horseshoe which Thomas' men formed. If the Twenty-first had fought under the eye of its brigade or division commander this would have appeared long ago and the true significance of the work performed by that regiment would have long ago been understood. But the regiment had been abandoned to its fate, which it took into its own hands, and in so doing decided the issue of the great conflict.

The history from which I have quoted is Van Horne's "History of the Army of the Cumberland." The historian goes on to say: "The reserve division was not, however, withheld, and Longstreet renewed his action with his whole force. Brannan had with him about twenty-five hundred men, and on his right were the two brigades of Whittaker and Mitchell." (These two brigades were those referred to and were under Steedman's command.) "And yet from his (Brannan's) center to Steedman's right, there were ten brigades of the enemy in line, and Gracie's brigade of Preston's division, on the right, went into action with two thousand and three effective men. With this immense preponderance of strength, Longstreet assaulted with frequency and vigor, but was continually repulsed. . . . Some unauthorized person had ordered General Thomas' Corps ammunition train to Chattanooga, and many of the division trains had been separated from the troops they were intended to supply, and had gone to the rear. On the whole line, the average to the man was not more than three rounds, and in some commands there was less than this. It was common to search the cartridge-boxes of those who fell. Steedman's train afforded a few rounds in addition, but this was soon exhausted, and his own

men were at the last entirely destitute. Whenever ammunition failed entirely, the order was given to fix bayonets and hold the hill with cold steel . . . and from Reynolds to Steedman the battle raged with unabated fury; but the enemy were gallantly repulsed at every point until nightfall, and in the final attack this was accomplished in no slight measure with the bayonet and clubbed muskets." Then, in a note, comes the credit that history has given to the fighting of the Twenty-first Ohio on Sunday at Chickamauga, as follows: "The heaviest of the losses in the withdrawal of the army were from captures, mainly from Baird's division, which left position under a heavy assault; from Steedman's division, and the Twenty-first Ohio regiment, the latter being between Brannan and Steedman. This regiment maintained ground in greatest exposure during the afternoon, and by its revolving rifles and gallant fighting made the impression upon the enemy that its position was held by a heavy force. At dark, portions of the Twenty-first, the Eighty-ninth Ohio and Twenty-second Michigan, the latter two from the left of Whittaker's brigade, were captured."*

General Longstreet charged the thin line drawn over the great hill upon which the Twenty-first was posted and which ought to have been held by a division, by brigades, beginning at a few minutes after 11 o'clock in the morning and desisting only at nightfall. When, at last, he took the hill he did not take it from the Twenty-first, but from two regiments which had been sent there to relieve that organization.

In an interview with Colonel Frank A. Burr, heretofore referred to, General Longstreet uses the following language:

"It is impossible for me to recall a field in the history of wars that deserves a higher place in the records of armed conflicts than Chickamauga. It was a great, a phenomenal battle, fought upon a field where the disadvantage of sight, of locomotion, and opportunity for

* Van Horne's "History of the Army of the Cumberland," vol. i., p. 353, *et seq.*

maneuver was greater than upon any battlefield I ever saw or read of. . . . Not many men would have held on as Thomas did. There have been few, if any, more dramatic incidents in war than the stubborn resistance of Thomas upon this hill. . . . Thomas' stand at Chickamauga was one of those grand incidents of war like leading a forlorn hope."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

ONE SURPRISE AFTER ANOTHER.

“De good Lawd, wat’s datchyer?”

Nobody will be disposed certainly, to find fault with a respectable colored gentleman somewhat on the yonder side of middle age for using such language under such circumstances; and if his eyes were bulging out so that you might have hung your hat on them, and his heart was thumping at his ribs as if to break a hole in them, certainly there was ample justification. It was bad enough that Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy, in his drifting search after the young captain, should have managed to get himself between two cavalry brigades just as they were about to begin to destroy each other; it was bad enough in all conscience that he should have been exposed to the two fires what time he was fleeing like a scared deer to a hiding-place; it was certainly much worse that, just as he had ensconced himself behind the big rocks in his place of safety, a human form in a gray uniform should come whirling through the air above him and fall with an awful chug almost squarely on top of him. And no one will quarrel with him, I hope, that for some minutes afterward he still flattened his broad, black nose on the hard soil of the hillside and refused to lift his head, dreading the vision that might meet his eyes.

Tom had gone bounding and whirling from one jutting point after another, and was caught at by more than one tree-top in his fall, or he would surely have been a dead man on reaching *terra firma*. But the clinging limbs of trees, while they may have scratched and hurt him, so softened the violence of his descent as to save his life.

It was bad enough, however, as it was, for in falling the back of his head thumped against a stone with a noise like the cracking of a bone. And so he lay there, unconscious and scarcely breathing, till Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy felt safe in raising his head.

"De good lan', what kin' o' fightin' you call dishyer, when dey shoots human folkse up into de air, like dat-away? 'Fore God, I done taught he war gwine fer to drive me inter dish yer groun', 'deed I did!"

Then he sat for a minute looking at the prostrate form before him, and occasionally glancing over into the valley, up which the battle was rapidly going, and away from him.

"Dar dey goes, leavin' him behin' jis zif dey didn't car' noffin' for 'im! An' I spec he's fout an' fout jis as good as de bes' of 'em. Datchyers what I calls cole-blooded selfishness. He's young feller, too; straight in de laig an' broad in de shoulder, and his feet is small like a genelman's; officer, too, by the clothes he's got on, an' a lily-white han', wid a ring—foh de love o' God, whah he git datchyer ring? Dat's de young cappen's ring, shuah!" and he sprang upon the prostrate form and snatched the slouched hat from the face; and then sat upon poor Tom's body, petrified.

The noise of the skirmish drifted further and further away, till, at last, everything was quiet about him, and the amazed darky had solved his doubts sufficiently to know that his long quest was ended and that the next thing to do was to get the boy into a place of safety where his hurts might be ministered to. And, thanks to his quick wits and the fact that he had lingered already long enough in the neighborhood to be acquainted with its resources, in half an hour he had Tom laid in a rough wagon drawn by a lean but willing steer, and was pursuing his way into the heart of the mountains to the east, accompanied by a broad-shouldered son of Ham who prodded up the ox with a sharp stick while he listened with wondering eyes to 'Curg's story.

They had been gone a full hour from the spot, when Ethel, panting and weeping, reached it. For to get to it from the cabin in any safe way, was to traverse intricate

paths leading a long distance around the base of the mountain. As she hurried on, her heart was filled with nervous apprehensions which were agonizing, she thought, in their torture; but it was not till she sat down to realize that he was gone beyond her reach, and she knew not whither, that she really understood what agony and torture were, although they made her dumb and motionless.

Meanwhile, as the evening drew on, a little log church set back from the trail in the deep shade of the hills, so that a stranger would find it with difficulty, was the Mecca toward which the steps of a congregation of colored people were tending. They slipped along quietly, singly or in pairs, in rare cases by threes or fours, and all seemed to breathe easier once they were inside the hidden sanctuary. When the church was filled and the candles were lighted to glow ineffectually in the midst of the darkness which seemed to be intensified by the black faces shining as if polished; and as the beams sent quaint shadows dancing hither and thither like disembodied spirits with still the substance of darkness, the old leader raised his snow-white head from a musing posture and glanced about him. As he did so every eye saw him and every breast heaved with a quick convulsive motion, promptly repressed. For there were rumors coming up in the hills in those days that were like fugitive breezes of the bracing winds of freedom which they knew were blowing full and strong outside.

An inarticulate moan, beginning with the old leader and passing through all the congregation till it seemed almost a shout, broke the silence and filled the little room, although all lips were closed and no one spoke. Then the strange sound died out and the people sat silent again, but with a new look of wondering and hopeful expectation in their faces. Three times was this repeated, solemnly as if it was a part of a well-established ceremony, till it became almost majestic and assumed the dignity of a mysterious invocation.

Then, from a dried and withered old crone who sat near the rude altar, bent and apparently oblivious to all that was going on, broke forth a weird refrain:

"Go down to Egyp' lan' !
Tell ole, Phare-O,
Let my people go !"

The melody was taken up by the young men and maidens, by the gray-headed old leader and the wide-eyed little child, and the church rang with such harmony of rich voices attuned to the inspiration of promise and prophecy in the words they sung, as might have graced the grandest cathedral and given it new sanctity.

Had they not waited long years for the hand of the Lord, and was He not at last moving, coming up to their help against the Egyptians who held them bond?

Prayer and exhortation followed the singing, and if in the zeal of their pious fervor they were irresistibly comic in their crude ideas and strange misuse of words, they were so awfully in earnest, so solemn and so reverent, that it is sure they had a hold on the Most High and felt the chastened thrillings of communion with Him.

Minute by minute and hour by hour they grew more and more exalted and inspired, and by turns they filled the air with loud and triumphant cries or crooned soft melodies of inarticulate ecstasy. It was growing late and the candles were guttering and sputtering toward their going out, and so low and soft was the song they sung that they seemed almost to have lapsed into silence:

"Swing low, dem golden lamps, swing low!
Swing low, dem golden lamps, swing low!
Swing low, dem golden lamps,
Dem golden lamps,
Wid incense all a burnin'!"

when a tap came at the door, and instantly all was hushed. A few of the worshippers raised their heads, but for the most part they sat bowed as if held in the thrall of an influence too strong to be dispelled. The tapping was repeated.

"Open wide de gates," commanded the old crone; "de angel of de Lawd is a-knockin'—let him come in!"

A thrill went through the congregation, filled with the wild mysticism of their religion, but no one moved.

"Open wide de gates!" again commanded the old woman; but no one moved.

"Oh, ye of little faith!" she cried, as she hobbled to the door painfully. "Didn't I tole ye dat it war de angel of de Lawd, an' is ye gwine fer to keep him out, when he's a-knockin' an' a-knockin'?"

She flung the door open as she spoke, and the people within shaded their eyes with their hands as if to guard against a glory greater than they could bear.

"De angel of de Lawd!" she cried in a shrill treble.

"Well, not azactly," answered 'Curg, standing on the threshold. "At least not jis' yit awhile, aunty! Ef de pra'ars of de righteous kin wash disheyer nigger white as wool, some day mebbe he'll go about fer to do de Master's wuk, wid big white wings on, an' a golden crown. But ef I ain't de angel of de Lawd I'se gwine about lookin' like dishyer, an' a-doin' of His wuk in my everyday clothes. Hyar's de Lawd's wuk, a-layin' out heah in the cyart what de steer fotch!"

A short explanation followed, which ended in action. Tom was lifted into a hastily improvised stretcher and six of the strongest men present bore him swiftly off over the mountain, by a path impracticable to the cart. Of course 'Curg went with them, and hastened their speed as Tom's frequent groans gave evidence of something like returning consciousness.

In half an hour the barking of dogs showed that they were approaching an inhabited spot. One of the men ran forward and soon quieted the noise, evidently being known to the dogs. Entering a small clearing the party stood before a large, double log house, looming up against the side of the hill darkly. After tapping at the window and a brief colloquy with some one within, a light was struck and the door opened. Tom was borne within and laid upon a bed.

The sole visible occupant of the house was a swarthy, undersized man, with quick, piercing black eyes and a firm and fearless expression of the face betokening a warm friend and an antagonist to be wary of. His iron-gray hair was short and thick, curling closely to his head, but was thin on top. His face was covered with a closely clipped, grizzled beard:

Lighting several candles the doctor, for such he proved to be, made a cursory examination of unconscious Tom, but finally gave it up, with an impatient gesture.

"What is the use? The light is not so good. We will wait for the daylight."

"But he is sufferin' misery," said 'Curg.

"We will fix that!" and the doctor mixed a draught which he carefully poured down the boy's throat.

"He will sleep—no fear for that! Now go! All but you—you belong to heem?"

"Yessah, I 'longs to him," answered 'Curg.

"All right, you shall stay," and bundling the others out into the darkness, and bidding 'Curg to take some rest on the floor while he watched, the doctor fixed his night-light and then with a bundle of fine corn husks and a handful of tobacco occupied himself with the manufacture and consumption of cigarettes, while he patiently waited for the dawn.

Before daylight came Ethel Lynde was far on her way toward the Union lines, and before noon she was met by Miles Bancroft at a farmhouse between the two armies.

"You are prompt," she said wearily, as he eagerly kissed her. "You are true to me?" she added after a glance at his face.

"True to you? I would go through hell for you?"

"Do you think so?"

"Can you doubt it?"

"I may put you to the proof—and sooner than you suspect," she replied sleepily. He shuddered and gazed at her bitterly.

"It is more than you would do for me," he said.

"Do you think so? You are mistaken. When you go through that place with the bad name for me, I'm afraid I will be at your side."

"Then it will have no terrors for me—it will be heaven!"

"Even if I am there in an official capacity?" and she laughed with a touch of scorn.

"All I ask is that you shall be there."

"I will be. Never fear!"

To some natures tobacco is soporific in its influence, and while the doctor seemed a man not given to yielding without a struggle, it is the truth that before the dawn came he was sound asleep in his big, roughly-constructed easy-chair, and it was the tickling of a strong young sunbeam that finally aroused him.

'Curg was already awake, and evidently filled with an anxiety which gave him no peace. Tom had scarcely changed his position during the night. He lay breathing heavily; and whether he was sleeping or was in a death-like state of stupor was not easy to judge at the first glance.

With a muttered exclamation the little doctor set about his work at once. He bade 'Curg kindle a fire and make some coffee, while he proceeded professionally.

There was no wound or hurt to be found save one at the base of the brain. With scissors he skillfully removed the hair and then, for the skin was only raggedly torn, he deftly laid back the scalp. After working awhile at the fractured skull, he suddenly became excited, and jabbered to himself with a volubility which filled 'Curg with the beginning of grave apprehensions. Finally he raised his head quickly:

"Here, you, negro man! He have been wounded before?"

"No, sah, only jist behine, I reckon; here on de back of de hade."

"No—no! You do not understand me! Some other time, long ago, he have been hurt here?"

"Not as I knows on, sah!"

"You belong to heem?"

"No, sah—yes, sah—he's de cappen, 'de young cappen, sah, an' I'se de cook foh de mess, sah."

"But you belong to hees family."

"Nebber knowed him, sah, tell jess befo' de battle at Murphysboro, sah!"

"He ees what you call Confederate?"

"No, sah, 'deed he ain't, sah! He's Cappen Tom Bailey ob de Twenty-first Ohio, sah, Union Army, sah! He war missin' after datchyer battle, sah, an' I jess foun' 'im las' night, sah!"

'Curg had pondered a little that morning, whether he should tell the truth about Tom, or should allow him to be thought a Confederate soldier. For obvious, prudential reasons, he had thought the latter would be the proper course, but on the whole, and under the influence of his surprise at the doctor's sudden and eager questions, he had concluded to tell the truth. And he did wisely, in this case, at least.

"How did you find heem?"

'Curg told the story briefly of the occurrence on the hillside the evening before.

"Ah, yes," said the doctor. "I hear the guns at the time."

Then he proceeded with his work. Suddenly, as he lifted a piece of the skull, a wonderful change came over his patient. Tom threw his arms out so violently that he nearly knocked his good Samaritan down; the blood rushed to his face till it grew almost purple and his eyes started out of his head in a way that was suggestive of a horrible thing. Then he clutched at his throat as if trying to tear something from it, and indeed did make a wreck of his collar. In his writhings he seemed to be trying to speak, and his friends eagerly sought to understand what he said, but for a moment it was an unintelligible gurgling. At last he cried:

"My God, he is trying to choke me to death—Miles—Miles—what do you mean?"

Then the violence of his motions calmed down and he rested, breathing heavily, and rolling his eyes about wildly.

"Ah, there has been something wrong, something bad," said the doctor.

"Water, water, Ethel, give me water," moaned the boy.

"Ethel!" exclaimed the doctor with a start. "Can it be possible that he knows——"

But Tom had renewed his struggle with his unseen adversary, and fearing that he might injure himself the doctor bade 'Curg to hold him, while he prepared and administered another soothing draught. So soon as this had taken effect the surgical work was resumed and finished and he was left at rest again.

A fever followed and for several days he lay tossing and talking wildly, while the doctor, listening and pondering, never left his side for a moment.

At last Tom opened his eyes languidly one morning just before the gray of the dawn had warmed to color. Nothing was distinct to him, save the whitish patch where the window was, which was the first thing his eyes rested upon. He was at last free from his fever and delivered from his delirium and was slowly growing conscious.

Far away off in the woods he heard the plaintive, prolonged cry of a bird. At first it was repeated after intervals of considerable length, then it grew more importunate and came quicker and quicker, querulous and yet beseeching, till its sadness seemed to enter his soul, and his eyes, poor, weak fellow, began to fill with tears of sympathy. Before they had fairly gathered, however, there came an interruption, as another bird answered with a round, jolly, confident note, full of melody. Question and reply passed swiftly between the two songsters till they made such a racket that they waked up their neighbors, who demanded, each in his own peculiar melody, to know what the matter was, and then all at once the whole forest rang with harmony such as no man without a baby or a sweetheart may hope to hear excelled this side of heaven.

And as if to prove to Tom that it was heaven, just then the first glorious golden beams of the rising sun lit up the blue and purple sleeping hills, and their prismatic clouds of mist all around, and through the open window the breeze of the dawn came breathing softly, bringing a thousand perfumes which the dews had been distilling through the night from the leaves and flowers.

And in his languor he half-closed his eyes and dreamed that he was in heaven, and for the moment felt that he could not desire a better.

But only for a moment.

For soon there broke into the concert of the birds another sound of whistling, which, while it was melodious, was so peculiar that no one versed in woodcraft would fail to say at once that it was produced by human

agency. And Tom, even in his semi-unconscious state, was able to perceive its strangeness, and he opened his eyes wide at hearing it, just as the doctor in his bed near by began to move in his sleep uneasily like one about to wake up.

The strange call, or whatever it was, was repeated several times, with apparently a growing impatience, till at last the doctor sprang up, wide awake and on the alert.

"'Tis she," he said joyously, "'tis she, at last!" and as he hastily attired himself, he glanced at Tom. Meeting the boy's eyes, wide open and filled with an almost childish questioning, he approached him softly and laid his hand first upon his forehead and then upon his wrist.

"So? And it is at last you, also, my friend? I am happy that I shall begin to make your acquaintance, signor!"

And his voice was harmonious and soft and accorded well, Tom thought, with the other voices that were filling the woods so sweetly outside.

"You will excuse me for a moment, I beg, signor; I have a call from my—a friend, outside," and bowing with grace and cordial dignity he opened the door and passed out.

Leaving the door open the good doctor gave entrance to a stronger draught of the cool breeze and to the sunshine as well, and both of these sweet influences of nature began at once to operate upon Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy, lying asleep on his pallet on the floor. Forthwith they fell to at blowing and shining full in that distinguished patriot's face till at last they disturbed his repose. He resented this and sought to prolong his enjoyment of that refreshing slumber which an approving conscience and a good digestion (especially the latter) always give, by a change of posture and a resolute closing of the eyelids more tightly.

But it was of no use, and the continued ministrations of the sun and wind, aided by the unconscious unstop-ping of his ears to hear the birds singing, finally brought him suddenly broad awake.

Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy at once had his wits about

him, and perceiving first that the door, which was carefully barred the night before, was wide open, and second that the doctor's bed was empty, he sprang to his feet and ran to Tom's bedside to see if anything was wrong there.

And whether there was or not, he stood pondering: for there was a great change in the boy's face, and the poor darky trembled lest the bright intelligence he saw feebly asserting itself in Tom's eyes was a bad symptom. And while he stood thus trembling and pondering, Tom, too, was turning over a thing or two in his mind. When he finally got it settled to satisfy him, he made one or two ineffectual efforts to speak before he could ejaculate faintly:

"Hello, 'Curg!"

And 'Curg was so upset by it that all he could reply was:

"Hello, cappen!"

"How's Nat?" asked Tom, with a great effort and a very thin and piping voice.

"He am all right, sah. He am well—dat is—de good Lawd, t'ank de good Lawd—oh, Massa Cappen Tom, you'se come back—you'se come back!"

And the faithful fellow sat him down on the floor to laugh and weep and praise the Lord while Tom lay quietly wondering what it was all about.

Then there came footsteps approaching the door and the swift rustling of a woman's dress, and in an instant a pair of soft dark eyes, too elate as yet for tears, were pouring divine balm into Tom's soul through his own; and kisses were falling upon his lips and face and eyes, too, till they closed in a swoon that came with a murmurous sound of caressing love jargon—and then he *knew* he was in heaven!

CHAPTER XXIX.

A FOOL'S PARADISE.

THE doctor stood in his doorway, open-mouthed and round-eyed at the scene before him. For, while he had told his daughter of a stranger within his gates, giving no names but leaving that for a time of wider leisure, she, on her part had not said a word of that which was uppermost in her heart, nor had she the slightest notion till she touched the threshold that she had even a remote interest in the wounded soldier lying there. But when she met Tom's glance, she went to him, flying.

"You will explain to me, Ethel——"

The girl suddenly placed her hand upon his lips and imperiously bade 'Curg (who was also standing by in great amaze) to leave them. When the negro was gone out she turned again to the doctor, who stood, comically patient. "You must never call me by that name, while he is under your roof; nor let him know by any word or sign that I am your daughter."

"But why is this so?"

"I will tell you at another time, not now. But pappy, dear, he is the only man I ever loved—except you—except you, dear, darling old pappy——" she hastened to add, being warned thereto by a look that came in the little man's fond eyes. "He saved my life at the risk of his own."

"But that is hard——"

"It must be so, and you will do as I wish, won't you?"

"I will. I always do."

"That is my own good father," and she gave him a kiss to reward him. "But see, he is in a swoon; you must do something for him."

"No. I will let heem alone; that is the best; he is weak yet, and as I told you outside, has been wild and delirious till this morning, for many days. Ah!" he added musingly, "it is not so strange to me now as I once thought it, why that I have been so much interested in heem. You love heem, Eth—I mean signora," and with twinkling eyes he bowed gracefully, "you love heem. He has saved your life. But is it so that he does love you, in return?"

"It is so that he does love me better than all the world beside," she began gayly; "poor fellow," she added softly and sorrowfully.

At first, for several days, Tom was too weak and happy to ask Ethel how it was that she came to find him; the little doctor sternly forbade conversation and the boy was not in condition to attempt a rebellion. And indeed he was content to lie there calmly, half-dreaming and half-waking, knowing that she was near him, and holding her dear hand in his. And thus dreaming for some days during which his wound was healing and his strength returning, he gave her ample time to frame a story for her father as well as Tom, which would have satisfied one much more exacting than a credulous lover, or a blindly doting parent.

The doctor was a man of marvelous skill, and his care of his patient, attentive and conscientious at first, now became also anxious and loving. He gave his mind to thought and study as to how he might best hasten the boy's restoration, and time rapidly showed wondrous progress, whether because of this or another reason.

And it was a great day when, at last, the doctor and 'Curg bowed their stiff backs to carry Tom outside the door and set him under the towering trees on the hill-side, on a reclining couch which Ethel's deft hands had made luxuriously comfortable with comforts and blankets and the two great bear skins which usually graced the floor of her own room in the cabin. And here Tom renewed his acquaintance with life, and felt his heart feebly leap within him as his blood stirred at the thought of all that might be before him. The grand and impassive hills in their massive strength held to his lips a beaker filled with strong wine, while they soothed him with the

uplifting lesson of patience which they teach to all who have eyes to see and souls to understand and appreciate.

Waking from a delicious doze which repaired the fatigue of his moving and the excitement of his re-entry into the world, his eyes fell upon 'Curg, standing by Ethel's seat, warmly regarding him. Then he knitted his brow for a moment, glancing from the one to the other, and seemed so puzzled that Ethel grew anxious and was about to speak, but he forestalled her.

"It is queer; I cannot remember; somehow you have had something to do together with it all—" and then his face suddenly cleared. "Oh, yes, I remember now; he brought your note to me, in the camp at Nashville."

Ethel started in alarm, and glanced quickly at the old ducky. She had paid but little attention to him so far, presuming that he was some camp-follower who had attached himself to Tom. But if he was her messenger to Tom at Nashville, she could not guess how much he might know that she would not wish Tom to know. But she was safe, as he soon made known.

"Well, de lan's sakes alive! Why, of coase, of coase! Datchyers jist what it is, an' hit's been a puzzlin' my pore ole hade all dis time. Don' you 'member, missy, datch you gib me de note to Cappen Bailey down to de boahdin' house to Nashville? Why, of coase, of coase!"

This opened the gates, and Tom's mind ran hither and thither, and this being the first day he had been permitted to talk—and he abused the privilege while the doctor went down into the "Cove" for an hour or so to see a patient there—he set to at the work of informing himself. First, Ethel must rehearse the story she had to tell to account for her presence there, and then 'Curg had to give him news of Nat; which he did with gravity and success, having been privately instructed beforehand by Ethel, in anticipation of this very emergency.

But the slow ducky was scarcely allowed to finish, because Tom suddenly came to a realization of the difference between his present surroundings and his last clear knowledge of himself, which was of the moment when he was stricken down in pursuit of the rebel colors at the battle of Stone River.

Here was the dangerous place for Ethel, and she braced herself to meet it. How much did he remember of all that had happened during and since that dismal Friday night? She knew that on the day she lost him during the cavalry skirmish a gleam had come back to him for an instant to tell him that his life had been attempted. Had the dim recollection of that event left him, or if it still remained, did he have any knowledge as to who it was that thus sought to kill him? Did he remember, would he be able to recall her own presence on the scene, either before or after Miles had tried to choke him? These and a thousand other things troubled her and filled her with uneasiness. She had carefully questioned her father to know what and how far he would be likely to remember things that happened about the time that he was first so seriously hurt, and in doing so she had been careful of course to give the doctor only such meager outlines as would suffice to guide him in answering, without telling him that Miles had tried to strangle the boy, or indeed even mentioning that misguided man. The doctor's replies had been in the main favorable, and at least served to help her to devise in her own mind the plan she would pursue when Tom became himself again.

And so, hiding her fears as best she might, she first made him tell all that he could recall of what had happened.

It was not much. He remembered all about the battle, and the glorious charge with Miller on Friday, and the capture of the battery. Then he told how he had started with some half-dozen men to capture the rebel colors. There he stopped. He could recall nothing else since then—knew nothing more than that not long ago he opened his eyes in the cabin yonder, and, listening to the birds had dreamed he was in heaven, and had waked to find himself in her arms which was all the heaven he could wish.

“Was that all he could remember?”

The question sprang to her lips before she thought of what might follow, and at once she would have given anything to be able to recall it.

And Tom again knitted his brows and summoned his

weak powers to the task, nor would he heed the little playful efforts she was making to have him drop the matter.

Very slowly it came to him; a vague and dim memory of a struggle for his life with some one who was sitting or lying on him and choking him cruelly. And strangely enough it seemed to him that the man who attempted this villainy, was an old friend, Miles Bancroft. Where it was or how it happened he had not the faintest notion. It must have been a dream.

A great load was off her mind, and Ethel laughed, and said that he must not confound what had really happened with any of the visions that must come to any one struggling with awful wounds like those which her own, true, brave darling had wrestled with. And kisses and love jargon followed; signifying much sweet pleasure to him, but testifying to her consciousness the great relief she felt that he knew so little and doubted even that.

"But who was Miles Bancroft?" she asked.

"He was the captain of my company in the three-months' service, and was wounded at the battle of Bull Run. When the regiment reorganized for the three years' service, he was not able to accompany them, but was subsequently appointed to the general staff and was at department headquarters—why, don't you remember, he was provost-marshal at Nashville when you got there and I had to report your arrival to him? Didn't he call on you to question you? That was the man."

"Oh, yes, I do remember, a stupid fellow came to see me that morning; but I paid no attention to him. I answered his questions and was glad when he left me so that I could go on thinking about you. I scarcely looked at him, I had your face always before my eyes! Ah! do you know when I first began to love you?"

"No. Tell me when it was."

"It was when that great, rude Nat found blood on your wrist and told me to faint in his arms because one of yours was wounded. Don't you remember?"

"My darling; and you loved me from that moment?"

"From that moment! And you?"

"I? I loved you from the moment when you fainted in

my arms as I lifted you from your horse on the pike, that night when those cowardly brutes were firing at you!"

A mantling blush, hot and uncomfortable, covered her face as he spoke, and she resumed her loving caresses with redoubled vigor to hide the shame that lowered over her features. Then she said:

"But, Captain Bancroft—were you not always good friends—were you ever angry with each other?"

"Lieutenant-Colonel Bancroft now, Ethel. Yes, we were always good friends. He is a good, brave, honest, true man. It was a queer dream, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was; especially if you never had any trouble."

"No, we never had any trouble—unless—well, yes, we did once come near being foes; but the matter was soon adjusted, and he certainly could bear me no ill-will, for it turned out all in his favor after all, and all bad for me. But what am I saying? If it hadn't turned out as it did you would never have been so dear to me—I could not have loved you."

"Oh, Tom, Tom! It was a love rivalry; and you always said you had never loved but me!"

"And I said the truth. I imagined I was in love once before I saw you, but I wasn't. It was nothing but a foolish, boyish fancy, and the young woman very properly gave me the mitten, for she loved Miles and he loved her, and he was a man who could love, and of whose love any woman might well be proud. I'll tell you all about it, for you have a right to know; and besides I always tell you everything."

"That's right," answered Ethel, with a queer feeling at her heart which made her resentful and half-angry. "Tell me all about it, and then I can judge whether this 'Miles,' as you call him, could have had any cause to choke you, even in your dreams."

And so Tom, holding her tightly by the hand the while, told her all about his boy-love for Margaret, and of the scene in the judge's parlor that April afternoon.

She let her hand lie in his and tried to restrain the convulsive working of her fingers, but she kept her face averted till he had finished. And then a little silence fell upon them.

"Why do you turn your face away?" he asked at last. "Surely, Ethel, you are not jealous of such a boy's foolishness as that?"

"Oh, no! Only I was thinking whether it would not have been better if she had loved you, darling. Of course it would have been hard for me, but——"

"Why, what are you thinking of? How foolishly you talk! Why, she was ever so much older than I. She was three years my senior." Again the hot flush passed over the girl's face, but Tom did not see it. "And I never could have loved her as I do you, sweetest and best and loveliest and dearest of women!"

And then Tom, weak as he was, showed himself no bungler at the art of love making, for a few moments. At last Ethel recovered her breath and smoothed her tousled black hair and asked:

"This Margaret Henderson, does Colonel Bancroft still love her, and does she still love him?"

"Oh, yes! Why, they were just made for each other. They are a splendid pair, and they are to be married so soon as the war is over. It is all settled."

"How do you know?"

"Why, before the battle of Stone River they wrote me from home and told me all about it; that they were engaged; that the old judge had given his consent, only stipulating that they should not be married till the war was over. And I saw a ring he wore; I knew it was one she gave him. It was a plain gold ring."

Quick as a flash Ethel slipped a ring off her finger into her pocket. "But why should I fear?" she asked herself. "One plain gold ring is just like another, and he could suspect nothing. Poor, poor dear Tom!"

Then she roused herself and turning to him quickly she said:

"I can tell you more about yourself and what has happened to you during the last six months than you know."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you suppose I could rest content there in Nashville, seeing your name in the papers among the missing, and do nothing to try to save you?"

"And you—what did you do?"

"I did nothing very wonderful. I went to the commander of the post at Nashville and got a pass from him, telling him that my brother was lying dangerously wounded at Murfreesboro. I told him that my brother belonged to an Illinois regiment and that my name was Eliza Landers. Don't frown! Do you suppose he would have given me a pass if he had suspected that I was a Southern girl? When I got to Murfreesboro I got permission from General Rosecrans to go and look for you. I told *him* I was *your* sister—and when I broke down weeping, for I couldn't help it, the stern old general had tears in his eyes too, and he said: 'Don't cry—don't cry—little girl! Of course you shall have your pass, and if those rebels don't let you have your brother they have harder hearts than I think they have.' And so he sent an escort with me, away beyond the lines—I had old Selim still—and after many days I found you in a hospital at Shelbyville. You were terribly wounded; your skull had been fractured just where it is injured now, and that is why you lost your memory. The doctor here has explained it all to me. It was broken and pressed upon that part of your brain that you remember with, darling, and you were unconscious for days, even after I got you. Then besides, you had a bayonet stab through the lungs——"

"By George, I remember that!"

"Put your hand there and you will feel the scar. Well, the surgeon in charge of the hospital was glad to get rid of you, and I took you off to the home of a friend in the mountains. And there we nursed you back to health again, only you were greatly changed, and were not yourself. You remembered nothing, and didn't even know me, your little sweetheart, who was breaking her heart over you!"

"And you saved my life?"

"I suppose so, for I really think you would have died if I had left you where you were."

"Oh, my darling, how can I ever repay you?"

"Didn't you save my life first?" she asked; but she turned her head as she spoke.

"Then God has certainly given us to each other,"

said Tom deeply and solemnly, as he drew her to his breast; "we can never doubt after this that *He Himself* has made us for each other, and brought us so wonderfully and mysteriously together, can we?"

"No," she answered faintly, as her face grew pale and her hands turned cold.

"Oh, my darling, it makes me very happy; my happiness is so great, so solemn, and almost awful, that I tremble at it!"

She did, indeed, tremble; and at last broke into a wild storm of sobs, hiding her face on Tom's shoulder. And he strove to soothe and quiet her, patting and kissing her cheek and hair, and murmuring his noble, loving faith in her, till at length she could endure it no longer. "Oh, my God, let me go!" she cried. "Let me go! I must be alone, a little while," and she fled from him.

"Poor child," said Tom to himself, as he watched her out of sight. "She cannot bear so much joy; it almost kills *me*! My noble, pure, true Ethel! She has gone to thank God on her knees, as I would like to do if I could only find the strength. But I will pray as I am—He will hear me just as well—especially as my prayer will go up with my darling's to His ear!"

And covering his face with his pale, thin hand, and while the tears poured down his face, the poor boy prayed earnestly and long and joyfully, and thanked God for this great blessing and asked His help that he might show himself worthy of it, if such a thing might be. And then he sat rejoicing with an ecstasy that ennobled him, till Ethel came back to him.

When she returned she sat quietly at his feet and resumed the details of the story of the period of his darkness, changing the facts from time to time as the requirements of her deception made it necessary. But in the main the story that she told him was true. And then she called 'Curg to take up the narrative where she left off, till at last Tom could account, or thought he could, for the months that had passed since a rebel musket knocked him insensible at Stone River.

Naturally satisfied on these points, he wanted news from the army. Where was it and what had it done?

But here he was checked. The good doctor coming on the scene found his patient grown feverish and excited and with other dangerous symptoms not present when he left him in the morning. So he was conveyed back to his bed under strict injunctions neither to talk nor listen to others, but to go to sleep. And to the end that he might lose no time the doctor gave him to drink a cooling cup, which soon charmed away his senses; and then Ethel took her hand away from his and left him.

Other long weeks of grand summer weather passed quietly and happily and quickly for Tom, during which he throve and grew stronger and more and more himself every day.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INEVITABLE.

FROM the hour that Miles Bancroft met Ethel Lynde in the boarding house at Nashville when he went to interrogate her as was his duty as provost-marshal, he was a lost man. The beauty of the woman at first attracted him as it would have attracted any man in whose veins ran warm blood. The soft, low, tinkling voice, exquisitely modulated and just what was to be looked for from her red-lipped, child-like mouth, added to her loveliness of face, eyes, and figure. And Miles found himself very much interested as was natural. But he never would have dreamed of loving her if she had not exerted herself to compel him to do so.

She had come to Nashville with a purpose very clearly outlined, and she lost no time in getting to her business. She had sought her employment first because she was actually a strong adherent of the cause of the South and was eager to do something to help secure the success of the Confederate arms; and secondly because she longed for excitement and distraction from sadness and grief over her own life which had been marred by her own acts in following her own inclinations in her own willful way. She was not as bad a woman as she was capable of becoming; but she was bitter enough to be reckless of her life, which she held much less dear even than what of honor and womanliness still remained to her.

She had lived long enough and been successful enough to have confidence in her ability to charm and fascinate; and she thought that it was a proof of her power that without much difficulty she obtained the employment she sought, with privileges sufficiently elastic to make every-

thing easy to her. And she had pursued her employment for some months in the western part of Tennessee and in Mississippi before she met Tom and Miles Bancroft. Once in a month or so, as she tired of her wild life, she sought her father in the mountains and there, free from any sort of annoyances (for she had so long been her own mistress and had her own way, that the old man forebore even to question her) she remained, till quiet communion with the pure and innocent pleasures which nature could afford her, soothed and tranquillized her. Then her old gnawing pain would start to life once again, and she would fly back to the excitements of her perilous occupation for relief.

With a dramatic instinct that was often useful to her she arranged the manner of her entry within the Union lines; and planned it to deceive, as it did; for of course everybody believed her story when it was supported by that of Tom and his men, who testified to the pursuit and the shots that were fired after her as she escaped from the rebels. Her coquettish and least harmful instincts were aroused when she met Tom and saw how much he admired her. She was old enough to feel greatly flattered at awakening such warm feelings in so young and so handsome a man. But she soon found that he was lovable and pure, such a sweetheart as is not to be had every day; and even if she had had anything to gain by getting him within her toils, her more dangerous nets, she realized very speedily that her own heart would not permit her to do so.

There was something touching in the blind, unquestioning, chivalric trustfulness of the boy, who accepted all that she offered at full face value and was made happy by it. Besides she could make nothing out of him if she would have done so; and again would not have done so if she could. If it is possible for such a woman, under such circumstances to love any human being purely and unselfishly, as other women do, she so loved Tom; and she would have given up her life before she would have put him in danger by using him or information he could give her, for the benefit of her employers.

But with Miles Bancroft it was different. Here was a

man on the general staff, of rather high rank and 'likely to be intrusted with knowledge of affairs which was of a confidential nature and therefore useful to the Confederates. And then he was a man; and of about her own age; and just the sort of a man for her to wheedle and use and she could take pleasure in doing so. Aside from business considerations, which were of course paramount, she felt the coquette's natural desire to conquer him and have him in her leading strings.

She had not talked with him five minutes before she realized this; and she at once brought all her skill into play to seduce him from not only his duty as a soldier but to any sweetheart he might have away up North, as well. And her success was so easy and speedy that at his first visit she almost despised her victory; and was fairly reluctant to give him that lingering, clinging pressure of her hand at parting with him the first time, which sent him off back to his quarters struggling and fighting a fierce battle with his sense of honor and his love for Margaret.

On his part, Miles went to call on this new refugee as in the discharge of a disagreeable task that had fallen upon him but which he would gladly have escaped. And as he stepped into the odorous hall of the boarding house he determined to make his visit as brief as a conscientious performance of his duty would permit. But as he came out he acknowledged to his accusing conscience that he had wasted the best part of half a day, and was angry with himself for having done so; while his memory lingered with a delicious pleasure over the little incidents of the hour just gone by; the shy, appealing looks from melting black eyes which seemed not altogether dusky with concern for herself, away from her home and surrounded by strangers in a rough garrison town filled with soldiers, but also almost pleading with a handsome man not to press his advantages too far, not to impose upon the innocence and ignorant helplessness of a poor, young girl in circumstances which should so strongly appeal to his chivalric consideration; these and a thousand other little things did memory constantly put before his eyes, treacherously aiding the devil to thrust Margaret Henderson's face far in the dim background meanwhile.

He did not surrender without a sort of a struggle. After his first visit he did not call for a day or two, wrestling with an almost irresistible inclination to do so, however, and trying to strengthen himself and his good resolutions by writing long and unusually affectionate letters to the loving girl at home who was praying for him hourly, and trusting him completely, and suffering agonies of apprehension for his safety; but never once dreaming of the real danger to which he was exposed and which if not overcome would perhaps ruin her own life as well as his.

But Ethel wasted no time; when Miles did not come she sent him a cunningly devised note begging his aid in some matters of petty annoyance; and after his second call she had no further trouble with him—save to keep him away long enough to permit her to receive poor Tom.

As rapid as the darting of a bird from the tree-top to the ground beneath, was Miles Bancroft's fall; and he plunged headlong into the intoxicating depths of a guilty passion; and seemed to change his very nature, almost as quickly.

He had, or he thought he had, only two courses open to him. He could act honorably and secure his release from Margaret, and what was of more importance, give her freedom from a man who was no longer worthy of her, and then abandon himself to the delirium of this unworthy delight which had come into his life; or else he could go on pretending to Margaret to be true to her, holding her to her plighted promises and taking the chances that no evil save that which blackened his own soul, and which he thought he might conceal forever, should come out of it to anybody.

And he chose the latter; for two reasons. First, he lied to himself and pretended to believe it, when he said that it was a thing that happened to every man, almost, born with any heart or blood in him; and if other men could go through with such things without taking any special harm, why could he not also? The second reason he urged, when his better nature would not be still, and to quiet it; and that was that he had become ensnared and it would require all the strength he could bring into

play to enable him to escape the siren's toils; and surely the knowledge of his relations to the noble girl in Clayton, would be one of the most powerful aids to redemption he could possibly have.

And then, as he drifted on, further and further away from the shore where Margaret stood, and growing weaker and less able to even go back to her, he became harder and more selfish, and said to himself that in the very nature of things this could not last long, and it would be a good thing to have the judge's money and lands to fall back on, and begin the career which his ambition pointed out to him, long after this dark-eyed witch had passed out of sight on her downward course.

As we have seen, the first intimation he ever had of her character as a spy he got on that black Friday night at Stone River, and then he found himself too far gone, too much involved to even think of turning back. He loved the woman so madly and desperately that he would have sacrificed everything to be enabled to share any part of her life. And he often, afterward, as he felt the galling humiliation of the chains that bound him, bitterly reproached himself that he had not killed himself by Tom's side on the battlefield as he started to do. And yet, notwithstanding the smart he felt as he acknowledged to himself that her anxiety and pleading that he should not take his own life came not from any love for him, as she half-pretended, but from a desire to keep him and make further use of him; despite all this, he could not overcome his meaner self, he could not make up his mind to leave her. And he clung to her, and followed and obeyed her like a dog, and lent his own resources, both of mind and the information he came into possession of, to aid her in her successful career as a spy in the employ of the enemy.

So abject did he become. And the more he realized his abjectness the more he became discouraged, until at last he felt that nothing but death could release him. And he waited for that release—if it came in his death that ended all; if it came in hers, then he would go back to Margaret and try to make amends by leading a decent life for the wrongdoing he had been guilty of.

There were times, indeed, when he dared to oppose his will and stubbornness to her wishes and inclinations, but this was only when he was in liquor. And his resort to whisky as a means of benumbing his conscience and solacing his grief, grew after a time to be a habit, frequently recurring to intoxication, but only when he had respite from official duties. At such times he grew fierce and arrogant; frightening Ethel very much at first, till she learned to go with him in his vagaries and soothe him till she could make him sleep. But she never felt quite safe when she encountered him in a state of intoxication; for she always feared that in a moment of drunken fury he might slay her.

With the adroitness of an accomplished *intrigante* Ethel devised plans by means of which, wherever she was (save one place, her father's house), she could keep up a constant communication with Miles. And she not only compelled him to give her the information she desired when she was with him in person, but also to send it to her when she found it either convenient or pleasant to be absent from him. Frequently she compelled him to make an excuse which would enable him, under cover of official business, to meet her at points between the lines; and he smiled grimly more than once when he saw how little value she put upon his life, thinking what a fool and cowardly slave he had become.

While she usually kept him informed as to her whereabouts, yet there were times when she concealed the destination from him. He did not know that this was when she went to her father's house in the mountains; and he grew unreasonable and jealous, and brooded over it till it proved his death.

For her long absence with Tom aroused his suspicions so fiercely, and he grew so desperate over it and inflamed his passions so by drinking heavily, that at last he sent spies after her, and eventually sought her himself.

It was in the latter part of August and just before the Army of the Cumberland started out on the Chickamauga campaign that Miles determined to find Ethel if it took his life to do it. He felt that it would be at least a blissful death if he died at her feet, and he prayed

that he might meet that end, if he could have nothing better. By following up the clues he had in his hands, the communications with her when he had last heard from her, he made up his mind that she was somewhere within a radius of twenty miles from a certain spot; and singularly enough the central point of his radius was the mountain upon which her father's home was situated. And there he determined to search for her.

He contrived a plausible story to persuade the general to send him out with an escort to scout through the country where he suspected that she was. And he spent some days in his quest before he found her; and he died at her feet as he had prayed that he might; only her dark eyes, fixed full upon his, as he also prayed, were not mournfully loving, but were filled with a bitter hatred and scorn fit to scorch his soul as it left his body.

It happened in this way.

He had spent the long day fruitlessly, searching every house and hut and cabin for the woman he so loved, and fearing, at the opening of each door or as he peered through a window, to find her in the arms of the rival with whom his jealous heart told him she was dallying while so long and strangely absent from him. He had separated from his escort and had sent them off at noon with orders to go back to the headquarters of the army, saying that he would follow shortly. He was dejected and drank heavily during the afternoon. And as he drank he grew more and more fierce in thinking of the wrongs he had suffered at her hands. He cursed her in his heart, and just as he had vowed that he would kill her at sight and then put an end to his own life, she appeared before him. The spot was within a mile of her father's house. Miles had dismounted and while his horse was cropping the grass by the roadside he sat upon the trunk of a fallen tree glaring at space with the fierce gaze of a drunken man.

But when, suddenly, old Selim, stepping lightly and daintily as becomes a high-bred horse bearing a burden of which he is proud, came prancing down the road and Miles lifted his eyes and beheld Ethel before him with a beauty he had never seen in her before, his heart soft-

ened and melted, and he cried out to her loudly and joyously. For she had been for weeks living amid purity and peace, and she had been soothed and calmed and begun to hope that she might retrieve her errors and lead a better life in some way. And all this had given her face a new sweetness and attractiveness. She started out on what she had half-determined should be the last errand she would ever do as a spy, having been seized with a great dislike for her treacherous, degrading, thankless occupation.

At the sound of his voice she reined up her horse, and looked upon him with fear, disgust, and astonishment. Her first thought was that he had tracked her to her hiding-place and probably knew that Tom was with her, and was determined to kill him. She plainly saw that he was in a dangerous state of intoxication, and fearing what she did, she determined he should never reach the cabin alive. She was armed and knew how to use her weapons expertly.

He rushed toward her with his arms outspread as if he would embrace her; but she coldly bade him keep his distance. He halted and his brow became black and fierce.

"What are you doing here?" she asked haughtily.

"Well, that's a pretty question to ask? I'm looking for you, of course."

"And now that you have found me, what is your business with me?"

"You are taking a high tone! You don't seem glad to see me."

"No, I am not glad to see you. I had hoped I would never see you again."

"You've got through with me, have no further use for me, I presume?"

"Precisely," she replied with icy coldness. "I have no further use for you, and I had hoped that I never would see you again."

Her tone and manner fired him, and he became a maniac.

"Perhaps you do see me for the last time," he growled hoarsely. "I understand you, you she-devil! You have

another sweetheart near here, and you have been with him all this time, while I have been eating my heart out for a woman who is not fit for me to wipe my shoes on."

She could not help showing that her composure was shaken. He saw it, and it gave confirmation to his jealous forebodings.

"Ah, it is true, I see it in your face!" he yelled.

"You lie!" she answered, unable to restrain her bitterness any longer, and suddenly grown fiercely wild to end everything then and there. "You lie, you drunken brute! Out of my way—leave this spot——"

"Ah, go away? You are afraid to have me near him? And well you may be, for do you know what I mean to do? I mean to kill him, just as I meant to kill the other one——"

She started again, and grew pale.

"Ah, that is it! That is the truth! It is that boy, Tom Bailey, you have here! You told me he was dead, that he had died on the field at Murfreesboro, and you had buried him. You lied! He is here and alive, but by G—d he shall never see another sun rise! I know where he is, and I will make sure of him this time!"

"You are a coward and a liar! Tom Bailey is not here, he is dead as I told you"—and she grew anxious and her voice took on a half-pleading intonation as the fear that he would kill Tom rose in her heart. But he started up the hill, by the bridle-trail down which she had come, and as he started he drew his revolver and set his face desperately, as she had seen it only once before.

"Halt!" she cried. "Stay a moment—Miles, let me tell you once more—stop, or I will *kill* you," she shrieked in her frantic fear as she drew her revolver. Miles stopped and looked at her an instant, with no fear for her weapon pointed full at his heart and not ten feet from him.

"You're right," he said at last. "You're right—you, you are nearly always right in this devil's business."

And he sat down upon a huge boulder; and drawing forth his bottle he coolly took a drink. His red eyes glared on her while he drank, and she trembled involun-

tarily. "You're right," and, replacing his bottle he stumbled to his feet, drawing his revolver as he did so. "You're right! I'll kill you first, you she-devil, and then I'll—" but as he slowly raised his weapon, she anticipated him, and a ball from her pistol pierced his heart. He paled and his eyes glared with a wild amazement as he reeled; then he made a convulsive effort to remain standing, but fell and rolled into the road, his revolver going off as he did so.

For a moment the woman looked at him with a horrified stare. She saw that the ball entered just over his heart. She saw his convulsive shudderings gradually cease; and then she knew that he was dead.

Then she tremblingly replaced her revolver, and lashing her horse, she fled swiftly, sending back one despairing glance at the bloated, distorted face of the man whom she had ruined, body and soul!

An hour later, Tom, sitting at the doctor's door, in the fast gathering twilight, heard with surprise a horse coming slowly up the bridle-path.

"Why," he said to the doctor, "Ethel must have changed her mind. It is well that she did, too, for she would not have had time to reach her friend's house before dark."

Ethel had made a visit to a school-mate, some miles distant and still further in the mountains, an excuse to Tom and her father for her going away. She would spend a week or two, she said, with her old friend, since Tom was getting strong so fast, and then she would return.

"Can it be she?" asked the doctor, rising uneasily. "Can anything have happened? When she does say she will go, she does not come back."

The sound of the horse's hoofs came more and more slowly, and at last stopped altogether.

"Wait," said the doctor, as he stepped within the door and securing two revolvers returned with them, giving one to Tom. "I do not like the sound. We will go see."

And they went, cautiously looking about them as they did so. And in a few moments they came upon a rider-

less horse, quietly feeding upon the grass. He bore military accouterments, those of an officer of cavalry or of the staff. As Tom approached him he raised his head and whinnied softly.

"Why," exclaimed Tom, "I know this horse! This is Colonel Bancroft's horse—the one the judge gave him—the roan colt my uncle raised. See, here are his initials on the saddle-flaps in brass nails, 'M. B.' What does this mean?"

"Let us go further and see!"

Tom mounted the horse, and the two went slowly and yet more cautiously down the hill. At the foot they found the dead body.

They placed it on the grass by the roadside to remain till morning; and as they did so Tom removed the valuables and papers from the pockets, and then they went back to the house.

And there, looking over the papers that night, Tom learned a part of the truth; for there were letters from Ethel; and they were only such letters as a woman should write to the man she loved.

And one of them was only a month old.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE LOST IS FOUND.

THE letters which Tom Bailey found in Miles Bancroft's pockets never left his possession till he threw them into the fire and burned them. This he did within three days of the finding of them. The three days he spent in striving to understand what it was that he ought to believe concerning the matters they opened up to him. We may well believe that he had a hard time with it all.

As clearly as anything ever breaks into the mind of man, there came back to Tom's memory the picture of Miles Bancroft's face lit up with a hot glare of light and filled with the fierceness of murder—the picture he had carried with him from the moment when a shock awoke him to half-realize that Miles was trying to choke him on the battlefield of Stone River. I say this was the thing that came to him when a glance at the letters first suggested to him that Miles Bancroft loved Ethel and that perhaps this love was returned.

And then his suspicions grew to a granite conviction that his life had been attempted by this man.

But he tarried not to think of this. Another and far more important matter claimed his attention.

Up to this time it had scarcely occurred to the boy that Ethel might be as attractive to others as she had been to him. As he esteemed her the loveliest and best of her sex he would have acknowledged that others might love her if it had been suggested to him. But the thought had never entered his mind. He was not of a suspicious nature. When he hated he did so in a wholesale way which left no uncertain ground upon which the object of his dislike might stand—the feeling shut out all

possibilities. So when he loved, he never dreamed of danger. He was never on the alert as to his own interests as some men always are except when the graybacks were over against him, and then his soldierly instinct made him suspect the moves the enemy might make, as well as guard against them or take steps to defeat them.

Now, however, he had proofs before him, that for some purpose or other, Ethel had professed herself in love with Miles Bancroft, and that at a time, too, when she was giving Tom every evidence that a pure woman could give that she loved him. What was her motive in all this? Could she really have loved Miles? Or was she deceiving him? She certainly could not have loved both.

Tom was a novice in love, so far as a wide experience in its affairs went. But he thought that there could be no doubt that Ethel loved him and him alone. No woman could have done what she had done for him; no woman could have wept over him and caressed and almost worshipped him, as he recalled that she had done, if she had not really at heart an overwhelming and genuine love for him. After the first shock there came to him a thousand things which he could not well have formulated into words of description, that proved to him that she loved nobody in all the world as she did him. And so, at last, he gave up that point as no longer a matter for conjecture, and settled himself down to ascertain if possible what Ethel's motives could have been in persuading Miles that he was the man who held her best and highest affections.

It was a long and a tedious and a painful pursuit. But at last he came to a conclusion which his own yearning determination to find nothing wrong induced, perhaps, and was content—in a way. This conclusion was that in some way Ethel knew that Miles had sought to kill him—perhaps out of jealousy—and that to save his life, or at least protect it till he should grow strong enough to care for himself she had pretended to love the would-be murderer. In this way she may have sought to remove the only cause for Miles' terrible enmity.

He wondered whether it was possible that Ethel had

witnessed Miles' attempt upon his life? Why not? He was convinced that the attempt was made on the battlefield; notwithstanding Ethel had said that she found him in hospital at Shelbyville, a rebel hospital. But she had also laughed at the idea that Miles had tried to kill him, and had even pretended not to know him at all. Now, in the new light he had just received, the story about the hospital did not seem a very reasonable one; he had become thoroughly convinced, and nothing would ever shake his belief, that Miles had tried to take his life; and as for her not knowing Miles—here was indisputable evidence that she did. He knew her handwriting, her modes of expressing herself, too well to doubt for a moment the authenticity of the letters. Ethel had written them.

So he settled down to the conviction, or what the poor fellow tried to make himself believe was a conviction, that Ethel had played this double part for the purpose of shielding him from danger.

It never once occurred to him that Ethel could have had any knowledge of Miles' death. He was spared for the moment the horrible suggestion that perhaps she might have witnessed it. For when Ethel left the cabin she took the bridle-trail leading away from the spot where Miles had found her. The path she took lay in the direction of the supposed home of her mythical school friend; but after she had got safely out of sight she crossed over a lower spur of the hill, to the trail which led her to the scene of her crime.

In the course of his determined fight to retain his faith in Ethel, each day brought him nevertheless new suspicions to combat. What were her relations to the quick-eyed, soft-spoken little doctor who had so skillfully healed his wounds? Despite all their precautions there was an affectionate familiarity between the two which had never before struck him as peculiar. Now, however, he marveled at it exceedingly. He did not feel at liberty to openly ask questions with a view to having his doubts solved; but it must be confessed that he did lay a few parallels and do a little sapping and mining to discover the truth. He flattered himself that he did this quite

skillfully, but his shrewd host saw through it in an instant. Indeed he had expected it and was therefore prepared to answer.

"Ah, Ethel, she was the daughter of my dear friend. When he died the poor little mees, she was given me by beem with his last breath. She has grown to be like the daughter of my own."

Tom was, therefore, speedily satisfied on this score. When, however, he encountered a few days later the question of her strange freedom of action, entirely untrammelled so far as her guardian was concerned, it was not so easy to reach a conclusion. She was daring and her supposed foster-father trusted her implicitly—he knew that—but it seemed a strange thing that she should take such long, lonely tours, no one knew where, in a country filled with rough soldiers, altogether without protection. And this led up with a fresh shock to the story she had told him at the picket post near Nashville. There seemed to be something strange about this matter. So far as her statement that her father was a Union man was concerned, why—if she meant her foster-father it was all straight. For the doctor did not attempt to disguise the truth of this from Tom. But if she meant her own father—her own father had been dead for years! Why had she omitted to tell him this? In other particulars her story and the facts which he found did not seem to correspond. And here he could ask no questions, nor even lay parallels, nor sap and mine. He must wait, and meantime puzzle his poor brains which had already suffered enough one would think, till the truth came.

But on one point he was determined he would not permit himself to trifle. He knew that he had no right to think a thought which was not to her credit, until he had the clearest proofs that she had deliberately and with a wrongful motive deceived him. He would believe in her till she herself should tell him that she was unworthy of his confidence—and even then he would take into consideration any circumstances which might be in her favor, whether she should urge them or not.

At first the boy's brain worked very slowly on these mysterious and troublesome matters. But by degrees he

grew stronger and quicker till at last he had worked them all out, and, despite everything, in her favor, as we have seen.

It was on the 12th of September that Tom, with faithful 'Curg to care for him, started out in search of his regiment. He had regained his strength almost completely, but made his journey by easy stages, and traveled in as straight a line as he could to Chattanooga.

He accompanied Steedman's two brigades in their charge over the southernmost prong of the "Horseshoe," having picked up a private soldier's uniform and a musket on his way to the battlefield. All that he could learn of his regiment was that it had crossed Lookout some twenty miles below Chattanooga, with Thomas' Corps, to which it belonged.

As he was plunging forward in the charge he suddenly became aware of a line of nonchalant men who were submitting to be run over by Steedman's troops with an appearance of the utmost unconcern. There was something about the manner and style of it all which struck him as being familiar, and he involuntarily paused to look about him. He happened to stop by the side of a big, burly captain who was leaning negligently against a tree enjoying the charge. In a second of time their eyes met.

"Hello, Nat. How are you?"

"*Tom Bailey*, by the jumpin' Jehosaphat!"

"How are you, old man?"

"Straight as a string, Tom, and mighty glad to see you!"

And as the men, recognizing their long-lost comrade, came crowding up, Nat turned:

"Where's that hoodoo Baptist?"

"Heah I is, Massa Cappen! I'se done gone fotch him back. Datchyers wot ye told me to do!"

Nat looked at the darky for a few moments with eyes that could not conceal his admiration. Then he let loose the restraint and roared out like a stentor:

"Oh, you old son of a gun!"

Whereat 'Curg's eyes shone yet more brilliantly.

"You'se been a-keepin' up your flesh pow'ful well foh

a man what hain't eat nuffin foh fowh months, Massa Kellogg."

But Nat had turned to Tom, who was bewildered by the fusillade of eager questions to which he was subjected. The hour thus spent was a short one; and when at its end the enemy came charging up the hill again and the air thickened up with bullets, Nat happening to turn about encountered 'Curg's face—which was by no means serene in its expression nor altogether filled with a calm content.

"Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy, what did I say to you long ago? Here you are stalking god-like in the awful hell of battle! Get to the rear and steal me something to eat! D'ye hear?"

"Yessah! I'se gwine sah, I'se gwine!"

And he turned to go.

"Hold on a minute; remember you've got to steal for Captain Bailey, too, this time. And, by the way, see if you can't manage to strike a little whisky."

"Yessah, yessah; ef dishyer ole nose o' mine hain't loss he's cunnin', I'm shore to get it."

There was a fair and large trail of dust that marked the swift retreat of Xerxes Lycurgus McCurdy as he shot down the hill.

When Nat faced to the front again there was Tom handling a revolving rifle with the best of them. Nat watched him for a moment and then, as he sheepishly rubbed his eye, said softly:

"Thank God, he is alive!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

A NOBLE GRIEF NOBLY BORNE.

ONE evening the judge went home to a supper with a sadly perturbed air. The city daily which the evening train had brought in was closely and compactly folded up and hidden away in the inner pocket of his coat. He almost staggered as he walked and the most careless glance would have shown that he was making a great effort to control himself. The war, so prolonged and so bloody, so filled with sorrow for the whole land, and the end of which still seemed so far off to the thoughtful, had aged the judge perceptibly, and the hale old man of the spring of '61, had become haggard and pale. And to-night there was a cloud of woe in addition to the look of anxiety with which his eyes were of late so much laden; and they seemed to shrink back in his head while dark circles surrounded them. He was relieved that Margaret was not at hand to greet him as was her custom, and he sat quietly in a dark corner of the library till the tea-bell summoned him.

Margaret had been unusually cheerful and light-hearted for some time. The rapid advance of Rosecrans' army proved, she thought, that the rebels were weakening and that the end of the war was near at hand, when the man she idolized would come back to her. She did not think as deeply as her father; but he was at pains to spare her his own forebodings as to how much longer the struggle might last. In addition to her hopeful frame of mind on this point, Margaret had another source of happiness in the letters which came from Miles. They had come much more frequently since the battle of Stone River than before. And they were much warmer and more affectionate. The protestations of affection which they

brought were stronger and more fervid than ever; and with them came such adoring estimation of her own self as seemed almost worship; so that she laughed at times at his "extravagance," as she called it, and grew yet happier to think that such a hero should love her so much as to exalt her far above anything that she believed she deserved.

It had been her custom for months to demand the newspaper from her father every evening when he came home, and to sit for a brief half-hour to read him the war news. On this particular evening, however, she failed to meet him till they sat down together at the tea-table. Even then, filled with happy thoughts, for she had had an unusually affectionate letter from Miles by the morning mail, she smilingly seated herself without looking at the judge, and so soon as he had tremblingly asked the divine blessing upon the food of which they were about to partake, busied herself in pouring the tea. The absence of all anxiety made her oblivious to the unaccustomed tremor of the old man's voice; and he was glad of it and sat pondering.

At length she raised her eyes as she said:

"I think I will step down to the post office after tea, father. I have written a letter to Miles, and——"

Involuntarily the old man groaned.

"Father, father, what do you mean? Why do you groan and look so sad?" but the shadow fell darkly upon her, and she went to his side. "Father, where is the *Commercial*?"

"I—I——" and the old man fumbled feebly about his pockets.

"Tell me what it is. You have bad news. Has there been another battle?"

"Another battle—no—oh, no—not another battle. But, my child, you must be strong, you must——"

"I can be strong, father. I am strong. You have bad news—Miles is wounded—I can bear it, father—show me the paper."

He handed it to her without a word, and then watched her pale face grow paler and her eyes dilate, as with an unerring instinct she turned to the dispatch which told

that Colonel Miles Bancroft, while on a scouting expedition, had been killed by guerrillas.

When she had finished she rose from her seat, and gently waving back her father's outstretched arms, went from the room.

"Please finish without me, father; I think I had better go upstairs and lie down a little while."

But the judge wanted no tea. He sat there for half an hour immovable. His heart was wrung with anguish at the thought of the suffering that had come upon his daughter, the darling of his old age, and the light of his life. Then he rang the bell and bidding the servant clear away he crept noiselessly up to Margaret's room.

She was lying upon a sofa as he saw by the dim light her eyes shining through the gloom. As he knelt beside her and kissed her and passed his hand caressingly over her face, he found that she was tearless.

"Oh, my daughter, how can I help you?"

"You cannot help me, father," she replied with calm, unbroken voice; "I would like to be alone for a little while, that is all. I do not wish to be rude, you know, dear father——"

"I know—I know. Oh, Margaret, Margaret, my darling child, I would give my life to spare you this pain!"

"I know you would father; but it would not spare me any pain; it would only make it worse. Go down, dear, and I will come presently and talk with you."

But he waited for an hour, softly shading the lamp in his library; for he could not read. Margaret did not come down. She sent him no summons. At last he took his hat and cane and feebly tottered down the street. His instinct told him that Susie would be the best companion for his poor girl in this awful trial. The two had become intimate, and loved each other more and more as the weary years of the war went by.

All Clayton knew what had happened, and as Miles' engagement to the judge's daughter was also well known, everybody knew where the blow had fallen. The groups of men on the sidewalks made way for the judge, who passed slowly along without a glance of recognition for any one of them.

Susie met him at the door, and anticipated him.

"You want me to go to Margaret. Yes, I knew that you would, and I have been putting the children to bed so that I could leave them. I am ready to go with you now."

She took his arm and the contact gave him strength; and they pursued their way without speech, till the judge's door was reached, when he simply said:

"She is in her room. I will be in the library."

"Where are you, Margaret?" asked Susie as she entered the room.

"Here on the sofa, Susie. I am glad you have come."

No other words were needed. Susie knelt by the sofa, and wrapping her arms about the stricken girl, placed her cheek against Margaret's. The old clock on the landing ticked monotonously on, till it seemed like the tolling of a funeral bell.

At last the contact of this warm, unobtrusive sympathy, broke the spell, and Margaret wept on Susie's faithful bosom. Then, the depths unsealed, the two girls talked softly a long, long time. The judge heard the murmur of their voices and was thankful. But still he sat in semi-obscurity wrestling with his daughter's sorrow.

It was midnight before Susie came down again.

"She is better now. She cried a long time, and it eased her pain. I have got her into bed, and she is quiet. I don't think she will sleep, but the worst is over. I would look in occasionally during the night, if I were you. I will come over early in the morning and stay all day with her."

The "worst" is not so soon over in such a case. Time seemed to have no healing for this wound. Margaret regained her composure and gave no hint of her pain. But when Miles' remains were brought to Clayton a few months after, and were given a public funeral, Margaret clad herself in deepest black out of which her pale face gleamed like marble, but firm and calm. Firm and calm till the roan horse came slowly stalking behind the hearse—then for a moment she shivered and hid her face.

It was a double funeral; for the remains of Aunt Eliza's son who fell at Chickamauga were buried at the

same time. The stoical heroism of the noble woman as she stood at the grave and saw the coffin slowly lowered was a height of grandeur which even the untaught instincts of her neighbors could appreciate. Suddenly she signed for silence.

"He has died the death I would have chosen for him. To free his fellow-man he has yielded up his young life. God gave it to me to bring into the world a hero, and I thank Him for it! My boy has crowned my life with honor, no less than his own. He was very precious to me, and yet—oh, my boy! my boy!"

Her firm voice broke into a pitiful wail, and extending her arms toward the grave she tottered and would have fallen into it had there not been strong arms there to catch her and carry her, insensible, from the spot.

Over Miles Bancroft's grave was placed a fair monument, and on its face was inscribed the record of his life. Below it all was an inscription: "This monument was reared to the memory of his adopted son, Miles Bancroft, by William Henderson, who is proud to claim even so small a part in such a pure, heroic life."

By the slowly-moving waters of the tranquil stream that graveyard may still be seen. The drooping willows and feathery elms make it beautiful where the angular stiffness of evergreens trimmed into uncouth forms do not make it ugly. And the idler there may read the inscription on Miles Bancroft's tombstone, as Tom Bailey did years after it was reared.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

DRAINED TO THE DREGS.

CAPTAIN THOMAS BAILEY, on rejoining his regiment, found himself in an anomalous position. He had long since been dropped from the rolls and Nat Kellogg was captain of Company "Q" in his stead. Nat wrote out his resignation, intending to go back into the ranks; but Tom tore the paper up and said he would have no more of such nonsense. The news of his return spread rapidly through the army, till at last the commanding general sent for him. At the end of his interview it was arranged that Tom should resign, and accept from the Governor of Tennessee a commission as colonel of cavalry; and permission was given him to recruit his regiment from the enlisted men of the Army of the Cumberland.

"In other words, Captain Bailey," said the general, "I will give you a picked command. Your duty from this time forth will be extra hazardous. We will give you a better command than any other man has, and will expect much from you."

"Very well; I will do my best."

The first man to volunteer as a private in Tom's regiment was Nat. The second was Dick Drummond, the third was Jim Druett, now the second lieutenant—then came Fielding the fifer, and Schultz the drummer, and John Hendley, till at last, lifting up his eyes, Tom saw drawn up before him, Company "Q" at a shoulder arms under the command of Sergeant Heimbach.

"Here," said Tom. "This won't do. I can't take you all. It would make the Twenty-first a nine company regiment."

"Dot makes no difference," answered the bold ser-

geant. "Gunpany 'Q' haf enlisted in Gurnel Bailey's new regiment. Dot Dwendy-furst, she's all ryate, wedder she be beeg or leetle—she will got there anyhow, ain't it?"

"No," said Tom. "This won't do. I will take five men out of the company—you may select them as you please."

The boys didn't like it, and showed a great deal of displeasure.

"We've got to go if Captain Kellogg does," said one.

"Well, then," said Nat; "if that's the fix you're in I'll stay with you."

And he marked off his name.

An argument followed, but it was of no avail. Tom would only take five, and would not choose the men himself.

"Vehres dot Berry," said Heimbach. "Pring out dose dices box."

And the company marched back to their quarters.

The cavalry regiment was soon organized, and made itself a terror to the flanks of the Confederate Army from Dalton to Jonesboro, in the "Hundred days' battle," which is commonly called "The Atlanta Campaign." But it would take a great many books of the size of this to tell the story of its exploits. Before the first sixty days were over Tom was given a brigade of horsemen, and when the army under Sherman reached Raleigh a delayed mail brought him a commission as brigadier-general.

Wherever he went men's eyes followed him lovingly. And whenever he ordered a charge he first drew his own saber and led the way with a dash and a vim which was not often successfully resisted. His brigade fell like a thunderbolt wherever it encountered the enemy, and there seemed to be no enterprise too bold or hazardous for its commander to undertake.

"For all the world like old John F.," said Nat one day when Tom had accomplished a particularly brilliant success. "What a team they'd make! Give old John F. an army with Tom as his chief of cavalry, and all tother place couldn't whip 'em."

But in these latter days Tom had changed greatly. Youthful as his figure was, and while his face was only that of early manhood, there was a sternness in its outlines and a gravity in the eyes which might well have belonged to an older man. And here and there on his head an interloping silver hair might be seen. Premature manhood had come upon him through a great trial to which he was subjected, and in carrying a great responsibility, and he was the stronger for it, if it had robbed him of some of his boyish joyousness.

And when I tell you what follows you will not wonder at his gray hairs.

In the early part of the Atlanta campaign Tom was sent one day with his regiment on a reconnoitering expedition. He received orders to pass around the left flank of the rebel army and to penetrate to its rear as far as the railroad. Then he was to follow up the road to ascertain as nearly as possible how many Confederates were posted at a certain point, and the character and position of their works. This accomplished he was told to burn a bridge or two along the railroad and report back to the headquarters of the Army of the Cumberland with all speed. He was specially enjoined not to get under fire if he could help it.

After gaining the Confederate rear Tom found himself in a small town with no greater garrison than a few stragglers. These he took captive, and halted just outside the hamlet that his men and horses might take breakfast. While drinking his coffee and munching his crackers he was approached by a small boy who, after an awkward salute, handed him a sealed envelope addressed to "Colonel Thomas Bailey."

He started with surprise and blushed like a maiden as he recognized the familiar handwriting. The inclosure ran as follows:

"Come to me. Please give me at least five minutes, I will not ask more. You will be safe. The boy can be trusted and he will guide you. ETHEL."

Giving his lieutenant-colonel orders to move after the

lapse of five minutes slowly forward till the regiment reached a stream half a mile ahead and there wait for him, Tom mounted his horse and followed the boy into the town.

Here at last was an opportunity for clearing up the doubts and surmises with which he had been struggling so long. His heart leaped at the thought that at last he would again meet with the woman he so passionately adored; and yet there was trepidation and a strange uneasiness mingled with his joy. He re-read the note as he rode along, and its tone of constraint chilled him. What might it not forebode?

But he had no time to dwell upon the matter, for as he replaced the note in his breast-pocket the boy jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Thar's the house, gineral."

At the door Ethel met him.

"I wanted to see you once more," she began.

Tom's arms were about her in an instant and he covered her face with kisses.

"Oh, I am so glad—" she began again. Then she sprang from him. "I am so sorry, I mean."

"Oh, Ethel! sorry to meet me once more?"

"Yes—for we must never meet again."

"What do you mean?"

"This will tell all. Don't ask any more, but say once more that you love me—and then—and then go."

She placed an envelope addressed to him in his hands.

"I do not understand——"

"Go, go"—she cried. "I had intended to send the packet to you—but when I saw you ride by this morning, I could not resist the temptation to see you and speak with you once more."

She looked more beautiful than ever, with a wild, anxious, pleading look in her eyes. Again Tom clasped her to his heart.

"Oh, Tom, do you really love me still?"

"Do I love you?" he replied. "You know I love you, and have loved you long. What are you doing here?"

The sound of horses' hoof-beats came thick and fast.

She thrust him aside convulsively, and pushed him out of the door.

"Fly, for your life; they knew you were coming, and they are after you—two regiments—quick, oh, my darling—for my sake!"

He turned. Confronting him and between him and his horse, stood a great, gaunt Confederate with burning eyes.

"You are my prisoner!"

"Not yet," replied Tom, as his hand sought his saber. The thunder of the coming horsemen drew nearer and nearer.

"Get out of my way," commanded Tom, moving toward his horse.

"Not much," and the Confederate swung his blade in the sun. Tom parried, and then they set to, fiercely and angrily. The Confederate overreached him, and seeing that he was about to thrust at his chest, Tom sprang back. At the same moment Ethel threw herself on Tom's breast, and the blade of his opponent, before it could be arrested, passed through the girl's body.

"My God! You are killed—you are killed, oh, my darling."

The Confederate dropped his point, and uncovered his head as Tom, kneeling, supported Ethel in her death struggle.

"Yes," she gasped, her blood gushing forth as she spoke. "I am dying, but—thank God, I—have—saved—your—life—with—my—own. Kiss me!"

In that kiss her soul passed away. . . .

A thundering roar from the rear, the collision of horses, the shouting, firing and uproar of battle around him roused him. His own regiment had returned, just in time to meet their pursuers. Raising the girl's body in his arms, and carrying it within the house, Tom reeled forth to mount and lead his men.

But he was too late. They had repulsed the enemy and were slowly falling back.

"We'd better get out of this, at once," said his lieutenant-colonel. "They outnumber us four to one. We only met the advance guard."

"Yes, you are right," answered Tom in a low, deep tone.

He returned to the house, passed within, kissed the lips of the dead girl once more, and slowly walked out.

At the door he met a wild-eyed woman.

"Oh, sir, please spare me!"

"Is this your home?"

"Yes, sir. Take what you want, but spare our lives."

He thrust money into her hands.

"See that she is decently buried."

"I will, but spare——"

"You are safe from us. We are going."

And he sprang to his horse and led his regiment rapidly away.

Nearly a week, passed in hard, strenuous work, had gone by before Tom had an opportunity to read Ethel's letter. It was long, and as he read it he grew swiftly older. It revealed to him the truth of her life. She spared nothing and made a full confession. The Latin blood in her veins had driven an undisciplined, wayward nature into a life of shame if not crime. Her mother died while she was an infant. She knew no proper care, for an idolizing father indulged her till she got beyond his control. It was too late when she understood that life might have been a blessing. She found that she had made it a curse.

It had grown more hateful to her since she had come to know and understand Tom.

She told him of her relations to Miles, and why she had lured him and made him her slave, and how she had stayed his hand that night on the battlefield. She told him how Miles met with his death. And in her letter she inclosed a plain gold ring. Inside it ran the inscription: "From Margaret to Miles." She did not spare herself when she wrote down the shameful abuse of her power over Miles which had made him give her the sacred token. She told Tom that she had seen him frequently, and had often been near him, since he had rejoined the army, at times when she dared not reveal herself. At her father's house in those deliriously happy

days she had begun to hope, she said, that she might some day be happy with him. But as he was the only human being she had ever loved purely and unselfishly except her father, she could not consent to blast his life. She had, therefore, left him with the purpose of never seeing him again.

She had been paid richly by the Confederates for the service she had rendered him.

"There is a blockade runner laden with cotton belonging to me lurking off the Georgia coast. Before you get this I will join her. I will take my cotton to England. It is a fortune. I will go to the Continent and never see America nor you again. Go on, to the honor and happiness that awaits you. I go to the living death which I have chosen.

"You are the only human being I have ever worthily loved. And yet I have deceived you from the moment I first met you—basely and cruelly deceived you. I cannot understand, myself, why I have done so. But I loved you, and worship you now as one adores his God. Even although a revelation of my true character would have unquestionably sent you from me, yet as I did and do sincerely love you, I ought to have made that revelation. For your sake, dear Tom. Do you shudder with disgust and shame, now that I have told you what I am, that I should address you with terms of endearment? Pardon me, for it is for the last time. An ocean will roll between us soon after you read these lines, and we will never meet again. I will not live long. I have not the courage to take my own life by violent means. But I will soon end it by following the so-called pleasures that I have been used to. No death is more certain than the one they bring.

"Was I altogether to blame that you loved me so? A thousand times I was on the point of speaking that your illusion might pass away, but I could not. The one thing inexpressibly precious which life ever held for me was your love. Nothing so pure and noble and chivalric was ever offered to me before I met you.

"I would like you to forgive me, but I cannot ask it. Your generosity might impel you to do so, but I do not

deserve it. You must not forgive me. I must drink the cup.

"But I may ask you to forget it. Think no more of it, and your firm will soon will enable you to blot it out of your mind. And some day you will meet some one who is worthy of you, and you will make her blessed among women.

"Thank God, I will never know her!

ETHEL."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SLEEP IS NOT DEATH.

WHEN the grand review of 1865 was held in Washington Tom rode at the head of his brigade. Amid the music and cheering of the occasion he sat upon his horse somber and thoughtful. At last, at the corner of Eleventh Street, the column was delayed for a moment by an obstacle near the treasury. Looking neither to the right nor the left but absorbed in his own gloomy thoughts, our hero suddenly became aware of an unusual excitement near by. Looking up he saw a party of his old Clayton friends advancing through the press toward him, and bearing a huge wreath of flowers in their outstretched hands. And as they came the cheering grew to be deafening. At last Father Goodman stood before him.

"General Bailey, your old neighbors and friends have come to greet and congratulate you;" and before Tom could stay them the wreath was thrown over his shoulders.

He was greatly moved, and out of his emotion seemed to spring a new thought. He sat more erect and his eyes from that time forward sought steadfastly for a face in the throng. And as they searched the faces in the crowd they grew brighter and he seemed transformed—like another man. An old dream came back to him.

Or was it that he was waking from a dream—a terrible nightmare?

At last his eager gaze, restless and hopeful, became fixed and filled with sudden content. On the raised platform near the White House where stood the president, he saw a noble, white-haired old man, sustained by the hand

of a young and comely woman whose girlish figure gave contradiction to her older face. And yet a second glance showed no age in the face, but a saddened, chastened sobriety which looked like it.

Saluting the reviewing officer Tom wheeled his horse toward the steps of the platform; but before he dismounted to take his place by the side of the president he lifted his garland and with bared head laid it at Margaret Henderson's feet. He spoke no word nor heeded the vehement enthusiasm that greeted the act, but after one look into the blushing girl's eyes he quietly ascended the steps and proceeded with his duties.

That night, as he rode at the head of his brigade across the Long Bridge, and as he came to the middle of the channel, he threw a ring into the deep waters.

On the 30th of May, of each year, Margaret strews flowers on the grave of Miles Bancroft. The ceremony gives her that pleasure which attends the reverent performance of a pious duty. It is accompanied by no sharp pangs of regret, no mournful longing for the love which has become a hallowed, a holy thing. Her memory holds the dead man tenderly, but with a serene and passionless contemplation which, compared with love, is as the white moonlight of a winter's night to the glowing illumination of a midsummer sun.

When she reflects that Tom never goes with her on this errand of duty she softly smiles and is not altogether unhappy in the thought that her husband loves her so jealously that he cannot bear to think that she once loved another. At the same time she cannot but wonder that he does not understand that her love for him is above and beyond all else that ever entered her life.

He has grown to be her senior whom she worships for the nobility of his nature, and he ought to feel this, she thinks. And he does know that of all men no one is more deeply or tenderly loved than he is; and he is satisfied and tranquil. The love he bears for her is his life; and it flows on like a strong and mighty river which nothing can disturb.

No word of his shall ever open her eyes to the truth as

to her old lover. Why should it? Miles Bancroft's fall is known to Tom, but to no one else. The knowledge will go to his grave with him.

As he looks back he realizes that the ideal drawn from Margaret Henderson was always with him, so that, as he lived under the spell of an enchantress, it invested the woman who came near to wrecking his life with its own noble purity. And he thanks God that, while his love for Margaret may have slept for a time, it never died, but always ruled his life and at last crowned him with honor and happiness.

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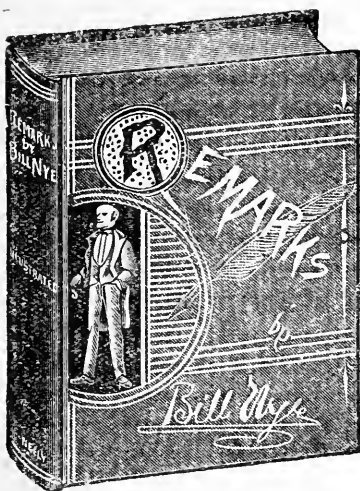
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